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EMERGING FORMS OF THE CHURCH

by

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## PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most exciting movements since World War II has been the emergence of various new forms of the church. Though they are many and varied, each has the purpose of renewing the church and helping it regain its sense of mission. This means an application of the Gospel to the whole of life and the confrontation of church and world. Many have contended that this cannot be done without some radical changes in congregational life. Howard Grimes summarizes his feeling by saying:

We must be willing to cast aside old structures--or at least to supplement them--if the churches are to be truly the Church in the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup>

These seven case studies will show how old structures can and have been set aside or supplemented. Where this will lead no one knows except that indications are that a new era for the church is likely to be the result.

#### I. THE PROBLEM

Because new forms of the church are emerging around the world at a fantastic rate, some assessment of the implications of these new forms needs to be made. At the

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<sup>1</sup>Howard Grimes, The Rebirth of the Laity (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 131.

same time certain questions need to be asked, such as: What is the true meaning of the church? Is the traditional local church obsolete in our revolutionary age? Shall we revive, reform, renew, or kill off the parish in its present form? Concerned critics agree that the church is sick in our day. It has lost its sense of mission and its sense of purpose. It has lost contact with the world of which it is a part. Convinced that church structures must be open to the world many have been engaged in experimentation with new forms to fit the age in which we live.

Thus the Church does not endeavour to set up an institutional schema for all times and places. It works out the form of its message and of its presence in relation to the movements of the world in which it bears testimony of the incarnation of the Word. It is in response to a situation outside itself that the Church will define its own structures; it is therefore clear that these structures are constantly in need of revision; the process can never be completed, because it is always having to be considered afresh. The greater a church's sense of mission is, the more diverse and flexible its structure will be.<sup>2</sup>

This bold declaration from the World Council of Churches shows the earnestness with which the church seeks to keep abreast with our changing world. Present church structure is not the only appropriate form for our age.

Emil Brunner has put it curtly by saying:

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<sup>2</sup>"Towards Structures for the Church in the World," IX:2, Bulletin, Division of Studies, World Council of Churches (1963), 21.

Protestant theologians are so misled as to believe that the institution of the Church is the necessary visible form of the Ekklesia.<sup>3</sup>

## II. THE SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Many new forms of the church are emerging on nearly every continent. In this study, seven representative forms have been selected. The first two, the Iona Community and the Evangelical Academies, working alongside the local church, represent pioneering efforts toward a more effective Christian witness, bringing renewal and a new sense of mission from the outside in.

The next two, the House Church and the Renewal Groups represent efforts toward a more vital witness through the discipline of small groups within the congregation, and renewing the church from within.

The Church of the Savior and the Missionary Congregation are efforts to find new forms of witness and mission for the local church.

The Urban Centers are supraparochial and attempt to carry on a witness through the existing structures of society and emphasizing responsibility in the public sphere.

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<sup>3</sup>Emil Brunner, Dogmatics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press), II:35.

Certain implications of importance to the church result from a study of emerging forms. These implications will be discussed in Chapters IX, X, and XI. Why are new forms emerging? What implications are there in these new forms in terms of nurture or the area of Christian education? These are questions we must attempt to answer if we are to assess the value and worth of these new forms. It is the purpose of this dissertation to discover and discuss such implications.

### III. OTHER STUDIES RELATED TO THIS AREA

There have been several efforts by church men to review some of the emerging forms of the church. Within the movements themselves, several have attempted to clarify their purposes in writing.

The writings of T. Ralph Morton, Deputy Leader of Iona, especially in The Household of Faith, and The Iona Community Story, have provided an excellent background for understanding the Iona Community.

The unpublished Ph.D. dissertation of Lee Gable "Evangelical Academy and Parish in West Germany 1945-1961" is the most comprehensive study of the Academy movement. Franklin Littell's The German Phoenix and Margaret Frakes' Bridges to Understanding both include helpful studies of the Academies.



E. W. Southcott was one of the pioneers of the house church movement and has described it adequately in The Parish Comes Alive.

The Renewal Groups referred to in this study are the Koinonia groups described by Robert Raines in New Life in the Church.

An excellent review of the Church of the Savior is to be found in Elizabeth O'Connor's Call to Commitment.

George W. Webber of the East Harlem Protestant Parish in New York has explained what we mean by the missionary congregation in his two books God's Colony in Man's World and The Congregation in Mission.

Material describing the work of the Urban Centers is mostly unpublished and to be found in reports, working papers and Journals.

Gibson Winter in the New Creation As Metropolis describes a design for the church's task in an urban world as the servant church.

In addition numerous reports and articles have been written about the need for new forms of the church. The World Council of Churches paper's Towards Structures for the Church in the World and The Missionary Structures of the Congregation are the best attempts to deal with the structure of the church. Study booklets by Colin W. Williams have been done for the National Council of

Churches to be used by local study groups. They are entitled Where in the World? and What in the World? and wrestle with the problems of changing forms of the church's witness. Other helpful resources will be found in the bibliography.

#### IV. THE METHOD OF THIS STUDY

A considerable amount of research is beginning to appear dealing with new forms of the church. For the most part it has been descriptive rather than analytical. This study attempts to offer a descriptive introduction to these new forms; to discover why they developed; analyze the theological view of the group as expressed by their leaders especially in terms of their concept of the church; and, to interpret some implications for Christian nurture.

#### V. ORGANIZATION OF REMAINDER OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapters II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, and VIII comprise Part Two in which we attempt to offer a descriptive introduction and interpretation of these seven new forms of the church. No pattern of describing them has been developed as it is felt by the writer that some need a more extensive description of their history, others need a more adequate description of their work, while still others

necessitate a more detailed interpretation of the theological basis of the movement.

Part Three is concerned with the implications of these new forms. Chapter IX deals with the reasons why new forms are emerging. Chapter X is a brief analysis of the concepts of the church to be found in these new forms as they relate to the idea of The Servant Church. Chapter XI attempts to interpret the implications of these new forms for the role of Christian nurture. Finally, the need for further research is indicated.

## PART TWO: NEW FORMS EMERGING

## CHAPTER II

### THE IONA COMMUNITY

#### I. HOW IT STARTED

The Iona Community is chronologically the earliest community in our study, having been founded in 1938. The Community was born out of Dr. George MacLeod's eight year pastorate of one of the worst-hit areas in one of the worst-hit cities of Great Britain during the "hungry 'thirties." The city was Glasgow and the district was Govan. MacLeod was not satisfied with the general program of the churches, including his own church. The great mass of the working people were not being reached.

To preach the Bread of Life to men without being actively concerned with the satisfaction of their physical needs is a betrayal not only of them and of the Church, but of its head.<sup>1</sup>

The old forms and structures of Christian witness did not seem adequate in making the Christian faith relevant to the working people. MacLeod believed that what was needed were experiments in new patterns of Christian living in which the whole gospel can be shown to apply to the whole of life, including man's political and economic life. What he envisioned was a company of pioneers who

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<sup>1</sup>"What is the Iona Community?" (Glasgow: Iona Community Publishing Department, 1962).

would be willing to live under economic and devotional disciplines but in the midst of modern industrial society. He saw the necessity for a training center in Christian living that would be more or less removed from the pressures of modern culture. Rebuilding the ancient abbey on Iona offered the possibility of bridging the gulf between the laboring man and the clergyman as they worked together on reconstruction. There would be immense symbolic significance in the restoration of a center that had functioned so effectively in the past. The original vision was for craftsman and clergyman to work and live together on Iona during the summer months and then return to their respective jobs for the rest of the year. In the early summer of 1938 eight men--four parsons and four laymen--decided to go to Iona as a committed group to rebuild the monastery there.<sup>2</sup> The monastery stood as a mute reminder of days past. On Iona, in the past, life has been lived with no artificial distinctions between sacred and secular. The object of going there again was to learn, in a true community life, how the church should live and work in the world today.

In order to understand the full significance of the

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<sup>2</sup>Olive Wyon, Living Springs (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 52.

Iona Community let us examine its past history briefly. Iona is a small, craggy island of the rugged western coast of Scotland. The first community was founded there in 563 A.D. by Columba, a Celtic monk from Ireland. He had come to establish a church and a training center for missionaries who would be sent out to evangelize Scotland, England, and parts of the continent of Europe. Although it was a monastic community, its concern was not for itself but for the poor and the lost of the known world. In the eleventh century, Roman Christianity replaced Celtic Christianity. During this period the Benedictine monks built the famous Iona Abbey which is the skeleton of the present Abbey. An Augustinian order of nuns was also established on Iona. At the time of the Reformation, monasteries were outlawed in the land and the walls gradually crumbled with the aid of later souvenir hunters. Late in the nineteenth century the Duke of Argyll, who owned the island, turned it over to the Church of Scotland, that it might again become a place of service for all Christendom. So it was in 1938 that Dr. MacLeod secured permission from the Church of Scotland to begin rebuilding the Abbey and use Iona as an experimental center. When the war broke out in 1939, it cast a shadow on the Iona experiment and slowed it down until following the war. Following the war in the winter of 1947-1948 a committee

met weekly to study the foundations on which the Community might develop and especially the question of the Church's economic discipline. T. Ralph Morton expresses their feelings in these words:

We began to see something of the changing pattern of the Church's life through the centuries and to realise that this problem of finding an economic expression of the Faith was no new problem.<sup>3</sup>

It was felt that expressing faith in terms of our ordinary economic living that the Faith will be made intelligible to other men, and only thus shall we come to understand it ourselves. Morton continues by reporting that "in autumn of 1949 we came to see more clearly the form of economic experiment that was possible for us."<sup>4</sup>

Having thus far been an experiment outside the church, MacLeod appealed to the Church of Scotland for a closer relationship. In 1951 the General Assembly unanimously resolved "to bring the Iona Community within the organization and jurisdiction of the church and to integrate it with the life of the Church," and appointed the Iona Community Board as the governing body of the Community and responsible to the General Assembly.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>T. Ralph Morton, The Household of Faith (Glasgow: Iona Community, 1952), p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>"What is the Iona Community?" op. cit.



## II. THE TASK OF THE COMMUNITY

The Community came into existence to meet a particular challenge. The challenge was to find new ways of life and witness that would bridge the gap between industrial men in Scotland and the church. No sooner had the experiment begun than war came, followed by problems that were deeper, making the task even greater. The whole social and industrial life of the country had become estranged from the Church or vice versa. During the summer months Iona is a laboratory in work and worship. Laymen and ministers come to participate in the program at Iona living and working together. Artisans contribute their skills to direct the restoration of buildings as clergy and laity work and worship together. All carry on their regular vocations during the rest of the year. Graduate theological students contract for two years membership in addition to their regular course of study and are given assignments throughout Scotland working with members.

Demonstrating that insight comes not so much from theory as from experience, the daily round of activity on the island follows a pattern designed to symbolize the importance of the Christian faith in the whole of man's life. They work at building tasks and housekeeping chores. They take part in a disciplined life of prayer and worship.

An effort is made to use liturgy and the sacraments in a way that will be clear and meaningful. For example, during communion the minister stands behind the table in the midst of the congregation. The loaves of bread which have been baked by the people themselves, are brought in by members of the community, broken and consecrated in the sight of all. This is symbolic of the Iona idea that the Incarnation is relevant to the whole of people's lives.

Much time is given to studying the modern social and religious scene to develop new concepts of service. Together members seek to discover ways and means of establishing communication with people in industrial areas, new housing developments, on busy streets and in the byways.

In 1963 there were 150 full members of Iona Community.

### III. ASSOCIATES AND FRIENDS

As the community life has developed, a great many people in many lands have desired to be connected with it. These people are called Associates and are bound together by their concern with the principles of the Community and by a comparable rule. There are 181 Minister and laymen Associates; 296 women Associates, and 242 youth Associates. All Associates receive the "Iona News" monthly and have

opportunity to attend regular meetings during the winter and special retreats and conferences on Iona and the mainland.

Friends of the Community are drawn from all over the world from various denominations. Their number now exceeds five thousand. For a minimum annual contribution they receive "The Coracle," the magazine of the Community, twice a year. Thus the influence and work of the Community has become global.

#### IV. THE OUTREACH OF IONA

When summer is over the artisans go back to their jobs and put into practice the daily rule of the Community. These rules are: (1) devotional, that is, one half hour per day of prayer and Bible reading, (2) time (plotting the day carefully), (3) economic (five per cent of disposable income to be used by group decision).<sup>6</sup> Monthly meetings of Community members are also held where possible for sharing with other members. The clerical members take assignments from the Church of Scotland in a team ministry, two by two.

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<sup>6</sup>Letter from the Reverend William P. Miller, San Francisco, November 25, 1964. Mr. Miller is a member of the Iona Community and lived in Scotland two years while participating in the Community.

The Community maintains a fishing camp for boys at Camus on Mull. Youth camps are held each week of the summer at Iona also. Each summer some seven hundred young people enjoy experiences of corporate worship, study and recreation and go back to their daily life with a new vision of their task. Community House in Glasgow is a youth center in which to play, pray, and study. Young people are aided in understanding the tasks of today, and corporate living.

If Iona is the summer laboratory, the work of the minister members of the Community is done on the mainland. The real work of Iona is carried out on the mainland, where principles are discussed and put into practice. In the industrial program on the mainland, members seek to establish groups of workers and managers who will work together to try to solve problems of industry and politics on the basis of Christian conviction.

Community House in Glasgow offers people caught up in the pressures of urban living and occupations an outlet for their energies and concerns. A wide range of study courses are offered including everything from the meaning of faith to the impact of drama and films on people's lives. Youth activities are also a special emphasis. People who come to Community House are prepared and encouraged to take an active part in political life, trade unions, and civic

enterprises. Traditionally, such encouragement has had no place in the life of the average Scottish congregation.

Each summer a project centers in Community House involving theological students who take jobs in ship-building yards and steel plants. As they live and work together, they share their experiences and insights thus gained. With all the activities of the center in Glasgow, the staff realizes that instruction and service are not enough. The main gap yet unbridged is how to relate newly interested lay people to corporate worship.

Alberta Kassing summed up her observations of Iona, Glasgow, Edinburgh, and other points of outreach in these words:

It seemed to me that here was a group of people really coming to grips with and struggling over how to make Christianity meaningful to themselves and others--to break through the barriers that separated the majority of the people from the church. At least what they were doing certainly seemed to have meaning for those involved.<sup>7</sup>

## V. WORSHIP

If the church is an extension of the Incarnation, then worship must be related to the whole life. Worship takes priority over Christian service, but it must give

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<sup>7</sup>Alberta Kassing, personal letter, December 1, 1964.

rise to such service or it is not authentic worship. This is reminiscent of the Reformer's contention that good works must flow from a man's faith or else his faith must be seen as counterfeit.

The worship services at Iona signify the kind of worship which churches are encouraged to imitate. Communion is offered every Sunday. The service is grounded in biblical proclamation. Worshipers are not spectators, they are active participants. Responsive readings and unison prayers are related to the sermon and the church year to help make the worship experience meaningful to the people. Morning and evening services of adoration and intercession are held on weekdays. The gospel is shown to be relevant to the physical and emotional needs of man in the Wednesday evening healing service. The Iona Community has pioneered in the area of faith healing. On Thursday evenings a special service is called the Act of Belief in which visitors and guests are given an opportunity to come to the altar to affirm for the first time or to reaffirm their faith in Christ.

## VI. THE ECONOMIC DISCIPLINE

It has been felt since the early days of the Community that an economic discipline was necessary to a faithful witnessing of the Gospel in one's life. As we

have seen earlier, it is not the only rule of discipline, however, it is considered as a basic one.

The Iona Community sees itself in the mainstream of Christian history as it develops its life and witness and especially in the formulation of its disciplines. T. Ralph Morton, deputy leader of Iona, has found historic precedents of the spirit of Iona's work in earlier Christian history. The following four paragraphs attempt to briefly outline, in part, this connection.<sup>8</sup> Some have praised his interpretation of Christian history while others find it to be too casual a treatment. Nevertheless, it gives meaning to the leaders of Iona.

In the first centuries of Christianity the church refused to allow its members any withdrawal from the daily work of the world when they embraced the Christian faith even though some felt the end of the world was near. The church regarded work as the duty of every Christian and strongly opposed those who gave up work on accepting the faith. This did not mean that they were to succumb to pagan customs because of their work. At the same time, the early church taught that possessions are unrighteous when a man possesses them for private advantage.

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<sup>8</sup>Morton, op. cit., pp. 26-60.

In taking this positive attitude to work, as in taking an avowedly Christian attitude to property, the Church showed itself as a community that ordered its own life in all its aspects according to its own faith and not according to the prevailing customs of the world.<sup>9</sup>

In the fourth century when Christianity became a recognized (legal) religion and then the official religion, there resulted a profound, but gradual, change in the life and witness of the church. The church was no longer persecuted but existed as an integral part of the general social life of men. The change had a deep effect on the life of the church. The clergy found themselves involved more and more in the social and political organization of the state. The ecclesiastical organization became increasingly modelled after civil administration and parallel to it. The result was an organization on a territorial basis, divided into dioceses and into parishes. Centralization of authority began to take place in Rome, as in the state. This did not, of course, all happen in a day.

The effect of this gradual but radical change on the general life of the church was profound. Discipline and order were no longer the usual pattern of those who had been baptized. To escape this worldly influence of the territorial church, monastic orders developed. This

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 29.



monastic movement in the West was deliberately aimed at building up a new type of Christian social living which would permit men in that age of chaos to find the meaning of the Christian life. In these early years, Benedict's order was the most influential. It had four purposes: (1) praise of God, (2) a lay community, (3) manual work, and (4) life based on a time table. The Iona Community has modelled its disciplines after those of Benedict.

During the latter part of the Middle Ages and the early Reformation period the family became a more important unit of economic life. Learning was no longer the preserve of the clergy. A married man need no longer be illiterate. In the economic, cultural, and political world, he now had a more prominent place. He also had a home of his own. A new emergence of the family and social living took place. The home and not the church became the center of life and the place of daily prayer.

In each age the church has been able to find the form in which it could express itself. New movements have arisen from time to time and the church has been called upon in each age to discover new forms of Christian living in which the love of God might be expressed. The Faith does not exist without this social expression. These new creative societies have been of various forms and have arisen in many ways. Sometimes, as in the foundations of

the monasteries, it has been the chaos of the world and the church that has impelled men to form new cells of Christian living in the knowledge that only so could Christian life be lived at all. At other times, as at the Reformation, the emergence of new economic and social groups has forced Christians to find a pattern of Christian life in terms of those groups. Again, at other times, as for instance in the modern missionary movement, there has been no conscious sense of a need to create something new but rather, in the demands of new tasks and in the experience of new conditions of life, a new pattern of life has almost unintentionally been shaped. What is certain is that new patterns of Christian social living have arisen to meet new challenges to the Faith and new opportunities of obedience, whenever there have been in the church some who have heard the disturbing call of Christ.<sup>10</sup> Convinced of the necessity for a new expression of witness in this age, Morton has listed three essentials for a community of faith.

The first of these is seeing all its members fully as persons.

The first essential is that any Christian group which is seriously trying to find the way of Christian

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 81-82.

living for to-day must be concerned with all the personal relationships of its members.<sup>11</sup>

A major portion of a man's life is spent working in an impersonal, machine dominated society. Today that part of a man's life raises new problems of personal relationships: in a man's attitude to his fellow workers, to his employer, and to the purpose of his work. When all that is neglected, men are not being regarded as persons.

The second essential is concern for all the activities of its members.

The second essential is concern with the whole of the life of their members in the full scope of their work, of their interests and of their social relationships.<sup>12</sup>

Two areas the church usually has neglected are work and politics. In the ordinary contacts and responsibilities of his local community a man must make his witness. And yet the church has helped very little at this point.

The third essential is freedom of choice.

The real weakness of our Christian society is that we have abandoned our freedom of choice.<sup>13</sup>

We have too often let others choose and decide things for us. When we have given up our freedom of choice

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<sup>11</sup>T. Ralph Morton, Community of Faith (New York: Association Press, 1954), p. 117.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 121.

we have settled down to live according to the standards of the society around us. This is where our economic witness must begin.

The place where we are free to choose and the place where our freedom of decision is most effective is in the use of our money.<sup>14</sup>

The use of our leisure time depends ultimately on the use we make of our money. How we use our money is one of the few real choices left to man and even then the choice concerns a diminishing fraction because of demands of the necessities for self and family.

The Iona Community has found the need of an economic discipline as it has faced the task of the church in the world to-day and the demands of its own community life.<sup>15</sup>

The basis of the scheme is that each member contributes a percentage of his disposable income to a common fund which is used for purposes chosen by the corporate decision of the Community. The scheme is based on the Income Tax return of each member. Practically everyone has to make such a return. One's disposable income is found by deducting from one's total income, Income Tax paid, rent of housing allowance, and all Income Tax allowances except the personal allowance.<sup>16</sup> The personal allowance is excepted

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>16</sup>Morton, The Household of Faith, p. 126.

because it is the same for all and a discipline must be concerned with what each spends on himself. The common fund, by the decision of the group, is used to help members in financial difficulty and to support what work or causes they desire. The percentage paid is five per cent. This assumes that members are giving another five per cent for their church and other Christian liberality and are therefore using at least ten per cent of their disposable income for others.

#### VII. SUMMARY

The church must go into the world, if it is to witness, and the best way it can do this is through lay people. These two emphases, witness and laity, summarize the two main concerns of the Iona Community. Iona is a training center to prepare Christians for this task. Donald Bloesch has justified this purpose of Iona in these words:

Withdrawal is deemed necessary for the purpose of self-appraisal and drawing near to God, but return is also imperative since the principal battle lines are seen to be in the midst of society.<sup>17</sup>

This social concern makes understanding the Bible more

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<sup>17</sup> Donald G. Bloesch, Centers of Christian Renewal (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1964), p. 113.

urgent, worship more essential and the sacraments more desperately needed. Politics, craftsmanship, economics, drama and home religion are not to be separated. They are all part of life. Iona is concerned with nothing less than wholeness. This does not mean more interest in economics than in the Bible; nor more concern with visiting factories than praying; nor more concern with public meetings than with public worship. Actually the opposite is true. When we desire wholeness the problems of prayer become more intense, the understanding of the Bible more urgent, and worship more essential.

The Iona Community has pioneered in its emphasis on the ministry of the laity.<sup>18</sup> Lay people living and working in the midst of the stresses of modern society are better fitted than the clergy to understand what is going on in that society. Therefore, they are potentially better able to interpret and proclaim the gospel to the world. Margaret Frakes points out this need in saying:

Our technical achievements have been allowed to outrun our spiritual resources. Men have failed to realize the relevance of the faith to their responsibilities and decisions in their work and public life.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Howard Grimes, The Rebirth of the Laity (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 54.

<sup>19</sup>Margaret Frakes, Bridges to Understanding (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), p. 25.

Lay people need to realize that they are the instrument through which God's redeeming work is to be done in the world. Toward this end, the Iona Community will aid them.

Since this experiment in church renewal takes place in Scotland, perhaps these questions will help clarify whether its premises are generally applicable to Christianity and in particular in this country.

(1) Do we need a new pattern of shared Christian community? Could renewal take place within our existing congregations?

(2) Is the factor of economic witness essential? Or is it more essential where there is less comparative abundance?

## CHAPTER III

### THE EVANGELICAL ACADEMIES

#### I. DESCRIPTION AND DEFINITION

The rise of Nazism and the debacle that culminated in World War II shocked the German Protestant churches into a critical self-evaluation and reassessment of their role in the nation's life. The estrangement between the German church and the German people symbolized the state of irrelevancy into which the church had fallen in the twentieth century.

During the last days of the Hitler regime Professor Helmut Thielicke had been thinking about bringing theology and secular science into encounter, as well as contemplating the relationship of the church and society after the war. He discovered that Dr. Eberhard Mueller had been doing similar thinking. They discussed the Academy idea as a new form of encounter between church and world which would challenge men's interest, make the church aware of the problems crying out for solution, and bridge the gap of indifference between the church and the great body of the laity. No longer is the old rural parish system adequate to meet the needs of a new industrialized society. The academy idea presumed a neutral meeting ground where churchmen and others could search for answers to baffling



everyday problems.

With the approval and cooperation of leaders of the Wuertemberg Landeskirche, they planned a two-week conference to be held in October, 1945. Lawyers and economists were invited. One hundred fifty came, and were deeply stirred by the opportunity for free discussion. The meeting was widely discussed in offices, concentration camps, judicial chambers, committee rooms and schools. Other groups were invited to later conferences--teachers, farmers, physicians, lawyers and others. Who is to be blamed for the past? How can we get back to a solid basis of law and order? What is man? Thus began the Evangelical Academy Bad Boll, with its buildings near the sanatorium where the first meeting was held.<sup>1</sup>

Soon similar Academies were started in other parts of Germany. They all trace their histories back to the first experimental conference at Bad Boll. All were established as responses of the church to the post-war German situation. In 1945 no one could tell what the pattern should be. So through experiment and creative effort did they begin to take form, and procedures and relationships to develop. As they developed they became places of discussion, of meditation and of research serving to confront modern man in his everyday questions and in the light of the Gospel to bring these questions closer to clarification. The German people had been torn asunder, their life disrupted. They needed to find a new purpose and unity in

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<sup>1</sup>Lee J. Gable, "Evangelical Academy and Parish in West Germany 1945-1961" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1962), pp. 20-21.

life. Churchmen were most sensitive to that need and experimented to meet the need in what have now come to be known as Academies. Franklin Littell has defined and described them in these terms:

The Evangelical Academy . . . is the place where "encounters" occur and "definitions" are given. But they are not "definitions" handed out by professionals from behind the curtain of obscure language: they are definitions of ideas and witness worked out by concerned people in face-to-face encounter with each other and with the Lord of the Church.<sup>2</sup>

In a recent publication of the World Council of Churches, Hans-Ruedi Weber describes the lay centers and Academies in five brief paragraphs:

1. The centres are places where Church and world can meet, where Christians first of all listen to what God is teaching them in and through the predominantly secular events of their time and environment. This leads to an honest dialogue between Christians and non-Christians as partners of equal right who search together for the responsible way in concrete situations of dilemma.

2. In this dialogue the message of the Gospel is spoken in the context of concrete groups of society and of concrete human questions, not as the answer and remedy to all questions and not in order to proselytize, but as a genuine witness to the Lord of the whole of life.

3. Church and world meet most intimately in the persons and lives of Christian laymen and laywomen who are both citizens of the kingdom and members of numerous groups in society. Many meetings in the lay centres are therefore planned in such a way that these

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<sup>2</sup>Franklin H. Littell, "The Evangelical Academies," Emory University Quarterly, XV:1 (March 1959), 53.

laymen can help one another to discover what Christian obedience means, not only in religious affairs, but above all in the secular decisions of their daily work and leisure.

4. Only a few of these decisions are made by individuals alone. Most of them are group decisions. It belongs therefore to the strategy of lay centres to gather people of such groups which in a given area and for a given subject are the decision-makers, be it, for example, representatives of the management and the trade unions working in one particular industrial enterprise, or a group of people coming from the same profession or the same life situation (e.g., journalists, civil servants, widows, students from overseas).

5. In the course of this work the appalling biblical and theological illiteracy of many laymen and the extent to which many pastors, theologians, and church leaders are alienated from the realities of this world have been revealed. Many centres have therefore become instrumental in a new kind of training for the laymen and ministers of the Church.<sup>3</sup>

Each conference to be held at an Academy is an experiment and prepared for by special planning. It is part of most of the academies' style to seek co-sponsorship with the regional medical association, journalists' society, trade union, society of civil servants, teachers' union, and the like. If public offices exist, their co-sponsorship is solicited too. Thus the church never appears to the public in a patronizing posture, holding conferences for the good of some professional group. If

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<sup>3</sup>Hans-Ruedi Weber, "A Movement Begins," in Centres of Renewal (Geneva: Department of Laity, World Council of Churches, 1964), pp. 6-7.

the conference is to be aimed at the relation of the Christian faith and ethic to conditions in the mines, it will be the union, the managers' association, the government inspection bureau--one or all of these.

Four purposes of the Academies might be briefly stated: (1) to bring the church and world into confrontation, (2) to understand man more clearly by considering basic themes, (3) the use of discussion as the principal means of accomplishing this task, and (4) involving those active in the church and those partly or entirely outside the church.

Many common features may be discovered, though each Academy has its individual characteristics. The average conference is a little more than two days in length, though they vary generally from one day to one week. They also vary in size with sixty to seventy as somewhat of an ideal in order to secure individual participation. In 1959 attendance ranged from 14 to 192 at individual conferences. Thirteen Academies in West Germany that year had a total attendance at all conferences of 42,415.<sup>4</sup> Most conferences are vocationally oriented with attendants coming from one profession, or several professions with common concerns. Only a small proportion of the conference participants are

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<sup>4</sup>Gable, op. cit., p. 30.

clergy, the great majority being laymen.

## II. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ACADEMIES

Lee Gable has suggested at least eight universal characteristics of the Academies have emerged: the conference pattern, independence, problems from life, discussion, use of the Bible, daily worship, common experiences, and atmosphere.<sup>5</sup>

The conference pattern implies some structure. Periods of lecture and discussion are planned. Brief worship is held morning and evening. Generous blocks of free time are allowed for informal conversations. The Academy staff and representatives of the group for whom the conference is being planned, meet preceding the conference to plan for it carefully.

By independence is meant that the results are not predetermined. Rigid controls cannot be set up by the church if there is to be effective confrontation with the world. Leaders have held that freedom to experiment and freedom to discuss without fear of restriction or repression is essential. In this sense, the Academy becomes neutral ground where Christian and non-Christian may express themselves freely and be at ease. Partial

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

underwriting of the Academies is done by the church but with no exertion of influence regarding their program.

Subjects to be discussed by conferences come from the difficulties and issues confronting man, that is, problems of life. Ideas spring from careful observation of private and public life, inside and outside the church. Expression of different views must be respected.<sup>6</sup>

The major secret of the Academy is the process of discussion. This is not understood as a technique or a method, but discussion as an experience of encounter at the deeper levels of feeling and understanding. These deeper levels can be most clearly indicated by the three German words "Gespraech," "Begegnung," and "Auseinander-  
setzung."<sup>7</sup> The English equivalents for Gespraech are conversation, talk, discussion, discourse and dialogue. English equivalents for Begegnung are meeting, encounter, treatment, and reception. English equivalents for Aus-  
einandersetzung are statement, explanation, discussion, argument and altercation. These begin to suggest the kind of experience taking place in the process of discussion. Kraemer accents the previous contention in saying:

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<sup>6</sup>Olive Wyon, Living Springs (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 108.

<sup>7</sup>Gable, op. cit., pp. 36-37.

Complete freedom of expression of whatever opinion and frank witness to the Gospel are both equally essential.<sup>8</sup>

The Academy welcomes to its discussions all who will follow the rules of a full and free discussion; communists, socialists, agnostics, orthodox and liberal, avowed Christian and avowed anti-clericals. It is the setting of open and informed discussion which is accented. Full, free, and informed discussion becomes more than a mere pooling of ignorance or prejudices and leads to discovery. Littell has aptly stated it this way:

Discussion is a means of discovering something given, something which is there to be found if all will bend their wills to find it. Order is discovered, not made.<sup>9</sup>

No less important than the final decision is the process through which it is reached. Full, free, and informed discussion will build mutual confidence and cement pieces of broken society.

The Bible is expected to have a central place in the Academy if there is to be encounter between Gospel and world. Methods of using the Bible vary widely but always in the atmosphere of intellectual freedom.

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<sup>8</sup>Hendrick Kraemer, A Theology of the Laity (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), p. 39.

<sup>9</sup>Franklin Hamlin Littell, The German Phoenix (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1960), p. 122.

Daily worship is given a prominent place in the Academies, but always by invitation rather than coercion. The nature of worship varies widely, from liturgical services to informal devotions. Most Academies have their own chapels.

Common experience is an element essential to the Academy. Eating as a group, living at the Academy, and participating in discussion build a common life to fashion community.

Atmosphere has been included as a characteristic since it is that which makes possible the creative experiences for the participants. Atmosphere includes: the setting, the buildings, the way the conference is planned, the conduct of discussion, the proportion of scheduled time and free time. Perhaps this is one of the most important characteristics of the Academy.

Each Academy has a full-time director and a secretary. Several Academies have multiple staffs who carry appropriate functions in the Academy program and in extension capacities. Volunteer leaders are usually called in for conferences being held. These are specialists representative of the conference group or the subject to be discussed.



### III. AN EXAMPLE: THE CHURCH AND DANCING

Perhaps the best way to illustrate what an Academy can do is to offer an example of how it can work with and reclaim a neglected social group.

For some time Dr. Friedrich Heyer, director of the Schleswig Academy had been working with two associations of dancing instructors. Dancing instructors, of which there are over twenty thousand in Germany, have a special significance.<sup>10</sup> But where Pietism has been strong, they are looked down on by "good people." Their services are used by almost all middle-class families and many workers' families to train youth who have reached the courtship age. Unaccompanied dating between boys and girls does not take place until the sixteenth year. At that time they are sent for weekly dance instruction for half a year. Instruction includes a great deal besides learning dance steps. Young people are taught how to introduce themselves, their friends, and their parents. They learn how to enter and leave a family circle, and how to behave in the presence of adults. How and when to send flowers, how to write social letters and notes of appreciation are also part of the instruction. The dance teacher is really one

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 131.

of the most important custodians of the social mores of their society. However, dance instructors had been neglected by the church.

After overcoming an initial suspicion of the Academy, Dr. Heyer helped them develop a series of conferences to analyze their role in society, and to see their job as a true vocation. Discussions were most fruitful. One result has been a group of specialists in the history, religious value, artistic nature, and sociology of the dance publishing a major volume analyzing the dance and the role of the dancing instructor. This is an illustration of how the Academies can reach classes and groups neglected by the church and help them see the relation and relevance of the Christian message to their everyday life and work.

#### IV. RELATION TO THE CHURCH

To understand the relation of the Academy to the church one must first say a word about the church structure of the region and nation. In Western Germany, there are nineteen regional church bodies or Landeskirche. These are the responsible units of Protestantism in West Germany. The Landeskirche has a responsible representative body and is presided over by an elected bishop. Regional policy-making and administration takes place at this level. At the local level the pastor is the responsible leader of the

parish. The parish is responsible for carrying the ministry of the church into the communities where the people live, and for promoting the Christian faith and life of individual persons.

In every case, there is a definite relationship between the Academy and the Landeskirche in which it works. The Academy is a recognized institution of the Landeskirche. Indications of this relationship are the assignment of ordained ministers to staff positions in Academies, regular reporting by the Academies to the Landeskirche, and the subsidy which each Academy receives annually from its Landeskirche.

The relation of the Academies to parishes remains in flux, and without definite policy statements. Many individuals from parishes attend conferences at the Academies so that in a sense the relation of the Academy to the local church is to work from the outside in, rather than from the inside out. If the Academy were to try to work through the inner core of church people, the aloof persons and areas of life would remain untouched. This seems to suggest a lessening of concern for a direct relation to local parishes. Perhaps the most effective way the Academies can work is to operate beside the parish church rather than in direct relationship with the parish church.

## V. SUMMARY

The Academies came into being just after World War II to meet the desperate hunger of the German people for free discussion and to bring church and world into encounter. The German situation is no longer critical in the emergency sense of the post-war years. Has their purpose been fulfilled and their usefulness outlived? No. Across Europe there have developed other academies as well as training centers such as in Holland, and laymen's colleges in England to meet the continuing need of our time. Weber expresses it this way:

These training programs have been inspired by the great gulf that exists between the church and the world, between our Christian faith and our daily life and work.<sup>11</sup>

The Academies began with the assumption that the pulpit should not tell the laymen what to do at all. The function of the minister, as chaplain to the laymen, is to make clear the biblical imperatives (the Word of God); emphasize the joint responsibility of Christians for each other and for their joint witness (the nature of the church); prepare the way for the proper understanding of decision-making (the work of the Holy Spirit).

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<sup>11</sup>Hans-Ruedi Weber, Salty Christians (New York: Seabury Press, 1963), p. 43.

Littell affirms the value of the Academy when he discusses:

. . . the basic assumptions which underlie the new style of laymen's work: that the apostolate is the burden of the whole membership, and that all true members are to share in the initiative in defining as well as answering the questions. The layman's traditional posture of docile receptivity has been abandoned. Neither is he to be entertained by words which sound noble and right, but have no binding quality. His is to witness, and in doing so to help define the terms of reference as well as implement the disciplines of discipleship.<sup>12</sup>

The unique service rendered by the Academy is to demonstrate that the church and the world can meet each other in mutual respect and complete freedom. The witness of the church is that all spheres of life are under the sovereign power of God, but that our behavior can only find its full expression in the context of secular reality. To this extent the Academy is a worthwhile new form of the church, helping the church recapture its mission and purpose in terms of relating the Gospel to everyday life and work. People not previously reached by the church are being reached by the Academy. It is sometimes estimated that ninety per cent of the participants of some conferences have previously been completely indifferent to the church, some vocally hostile to its claims.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Littell, The German Phoenix, p. 125.

<sup>13</sup>Margaret Frakes, Bridges to Understanding (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), p. 59.

Therefore it is the purpose of the Academy:

. . . not to convert participants to Christianity or to expound the Christian viewpoint against all challenges, but to encourage exchange of opinion in a friendly neutral atmosphere between the church and the estranged. The result is honest probing for workable solutions, therapeutic reconciling of differences, stimulation of respect between men.<sup>14</sup>

There can be no doubt that the free and open atmosphere prevailing in academy discussions has won a new respect for the church from people long antagonistic or indifferent to it. In the process, the church has gained a new perspective on herself and her role in society. The church has rediscovered the world, and the world has rediscovered the church. In a brief statement, Weber has summarized the Academy aim in saying:

The maintenance of freedom today, and indeed the continued existence of humanity, demands more than ever the ministry of the Church. To pioneer and develop this ministry is the fundamental aim of the Protestant Academies.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Hans-Reudi Weber (ed.), Signs of Renewal (Geneva: Department of the Laity, World Council of Churches, 1957), p. 11.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE HOUSE CHURCH

#### I. THE HOUSE CHURCH IDEA

The parish as a form of ecclesiastical life is dead unless the sense of solidarity be found again and a new pattern for its expression. Iona has initiated experimentation in Scotland: "In some parishes, especially in the new housing areas, these experiments in new patterns of congregational life come under the new and generic term of The House Church."<sup>1</sup> The gathering of people in homes is not primarily for Bible study alone. It is the church in that street meeting for the purposes of the church.

There is Bible study, there is worship, there is discussion about the things that really concern them. People talk quite differently from the way they talk in the church hall. They may drink tea, but as they discuss the needs of the people of the area, they are not only concerned about church people but of everyone.

Three things are implied in the use of the term "The House Church" according to Morton.<sup>2</sup> The first is that the church is in the home. We have too often thought of

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<sup>1</sup>T. Ralph Morton, The Iona Community Story (London: Lutterworth Press, 1959), p. 72.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 73 ff.

the church only as a building. To many people the church is that building and what the church does is what goes on in that building. Only by making the church meet in the homes of the people will they come to understand that the church is made up of people, not stones. What the church does is what the members do in their ordinary lives.

The second implication lies in the fact that the large congregation is an amorphous body whose members cannot know each other and therefore cannot act together. By the creation of smaller units in the congregation, the church can become a body of people who know and love each other. They will know what needs to be done in their situation and know how to do it. The congregation in which the writer ministers, numbers over two thousand. Each week even the old timers are meeting other old timers they have never met personally before. Newer people are almost at a complete loss in terms of meaningful relationships until they become acquainted in some smaller unit of the congregation.

The third implication of "The House Church" is that the members of the church are primarily concerned about their own Christian obedience in their own lives. Congregational life during the past century has been largely based on the form of philanthropic societies. The justification of a church organization was that it was doing good



to young people or doing good to people outside the church. It has been difficult to get church people to see that their primary concern should be their own obedience. Many in the church are looking for help precisely at this point. But the church cannot help them until it transforms its way of life. Those involved in the house church movement have felt that this kind of grouping for the church can better bring about the kind of renewed dedication to the gospel which will make it relevant to all of life.

This infers or implies that something is wrong with the church. Nick Earle asks, "What's wrong with the church?" and answers in part in these words:

Perhaps the best claim can be made by those who are making the effort to transplant worship from the parish church to the homes of parishioners and thus liberate it from type. ---But it has a double advantage. It bridges the gap between religion and life by incorporating in worship the objects of daily use--when, for example, an altar is made of what is normally a kitchen table. And in stressing the place of the individual in worship it affords an opportunity to introduce one's neighbours to Christian worship in a way which the parish church, which would overwhelm him not only with strange words and strange practices but also with strange people, could scarcely hope to do.<sup>3</sup>

The church has not been very successful in integrating man's sacred and secular life, if such a distinction can be made. Frakes makes these comments about the house church:

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<sup>3</sup>Nick Earle, What's Wrong With the Church (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1961), p. 149.

In certain Anglican parishes clergymen, most of them young, are experimenting with methods of parish renewal in an effort to carry the church into the lives of people who, while nominally members of the Church of England, have long since lost the habit of taking part in her services or depending on her ministries. Sometimes devotions are conducted for a single family at home, sometimes several families are gathered together in a central home for worship. Often communion becomes a part of the worship, with the kitchen table as the center.<sup>4</sup>

The result, in many cases, is that the church's worship and ministries become a part of the very lives of the people.

## II. THE HOUSE CHURCH AT HALTON

Are we the Body of Christ or just a group of people who go to a church building? Is there a church on our street? If we are just a group of people who go to a church building, then we can go on building up the building and ignore what our faith says to life. If we just go to attend services, sing hymns, pray prayers, attend a men's or women's meeting, a youth fellowship, or teach children some Bible stories; then where is the church as the Body of Christ?

The absence of a sense of fellowship in the church anything like that of the New Testament koinonia should

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<sup>4</sup>Margaret Frakes, Bridges to Understanding (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), p. 33.

not be attributed merely to changing social conditions. In part, it is due to the inferior quality of Christians and to the fact that in our worship and church social life we are seeking less to do the will of God than to maintain the church as an efficient organization.

The church is to bring the wholeness of Christ to the whole of mankind. All men are to be whole. Canon Southcott goes on to say, "And the Church is to bring the completeness, the wholeness of Christ to the whole man."<sup>5</sup>

Each person as a member of the community is to grow to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Disease and sin prevent Christ's wholeness. So the church is to minister to the sick of mind, body, and spirit. Thus the church is a redeemed and a redeeming community, carrying on Christ's atoning work for the whole of creation.

It is difficult to say precisely when the turning point came at Halton. Ever since 1949 the Canon and some of the leaders had been thinking of ways to make worship more real and to take the church into the parish. One of the turning points is described thus:

Since our campaign (then called a mission) in October, 1952, we have become growingly convinced that we ought to be helping people to come step by step right into the centre of the worshipping community, the

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<sup>5</sup>E. W. Southcott, The Parish Comes Alive (London: Mowbray, 1961), p. 18.

central act of which is the Eucharist. One of the questions we have been asking ourselves is, "Where do the Sunday offices fit into the general aim and policy?" At the time of the mission we saw the need for a form of service in the parish church on Sunday to which non-worshippers could come; so on Sunday evening we used a service of hymns, Bible readings, sermon, and all the parts of prayer, carefully based on a definite theme for each service. These theme services, or people's services, did help some people come into the worshipping fellowship and we learned by practice different ways of prayer, but relatively few were drawn in permanently. From this experience we tried to see what the future programme ought to be.<sup>6</sup>

During 1953 and 1954 additional experimentation was carried on in an endeavor to determine the pattern of Sunday services. It seemed that the lapsed baptized had been so far removed from the worshipping community that they were not even ready for a people's service.

So on the first two Sundays in Advent, 1953, instead of having sung Evensong at 6 p.m. followed immediately by people's service in Church, we sang Evensong at 6 p.m. and moved out for 7:30 p.m. to five houses, and in each of these houses a short evening service was held, conducted by lay people.<sup>7</sup>

This marked the beginning of services in the homes of Halton. Being sensitive to the needs of the whole parish, the first services were held in the homes of sick or elderly people or other folk who could not come to the church building. These people welcomed the opportunity of having services in their homes, which has lead to the discovery of the church outside the church building. In

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

1954, ten of these house services were planned to take place after Evensong every first Sunday of the month. The services were all conducted by lay people, sometimes all by young people.

Having become quite convinced that these house services were meeting a real need in the parish, Evensong was decentralized. From September, 1956, ten house Evensongs every Sunday were begun. All this seemed to be quite a natural development of being the church--the church inside and outside the church building.

Beginning in Lent, 1955, the first celebration of the Eucharist was held in a house. This again seemed to be a natural outgrowth of a need in the parish on the part of the sick and elderly, but perhaps even more important, the need to link the Eucharist to the life of the people. In section IV, The Intensive House Church, we shall discuss this at greater length.

Robinson summarizes his impressions after a visit to Halton in these words:

I shall not attempt to describe what I saw at Halton, except to say that one found the Church living at a level at which she can seldom have lived since the days of the Acts. The breaking of bread from house to house and the rediscovery of the Ecclesia of God in all its fulness at basement level--these can be described only by sharing in them and by listening to the unaffected testimony of men and women who owe to them their knowledge of Christ and a Churchmanship

vivid and articulate, often concealed from the wise and prudent.<sup>8</sup>

### III. THEOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION OF THE HOUSE CHURCH

The house church idea that Halton has discovered workable, Canon Southcott finds full theological justification for in an article by Dr. John A. T. Robinson.<sup>9</sup>

There are two mistakes we make in thinking about the house church, according to Robinson. Both of them are derived from an untheological attitude of mind. The first is to think of the house church as a purely temporary expedient. It is thought of as a makeshift arrangement until the parish church can be developed. This kind of thinking, of course, betrays an identification of the church with a building. The second error is to think of the house church simply as an evangelistic tool. As such, it is a technique for getting at those not yet ready to accept the Christianity of the parish church. It is sort of a half-way house for the semi-converted. Both these conceptions are untrue to the New Testament. In the New Testament the church in the house is not an expedient.

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 76-77; citing John A. T. Robinson, Theology (August 1953).

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 70-74; citing John A. T. Robinson, Theology (August 1950).

When Paul sends greetings to various people and the church in their house, he is not implying that this is not a real church, that it is only a semi-Christian outpost of the faith. These were real churches even though they were within a larger parish concept of the church.

This idea of the cellular structure of the church is something sorely lost in the modern church. Parishes today are, for the most part, collections of individuals or of organizations. These latter are not units of the whole church in miniature but groupings based on sex, age, or common interest. They cannot be called churches. By contrast, the house church is essentially the same mixture as the lump except that the area of community is smaller.

Organizations of the church are really an extra option. The cellular structure of the church is necessary to its continued life. It was this feeling which led John Wesley to insist that every Methodist should be a member of a class meeting. In Johannine metaphor the house church represents the tap-roots of the vine. The house church is the part of the vine embedded in the deepest crevices and seams of the secular world. The house church feeds new life into the parish church just as the innumerable tap-roots nourish the stock of the vine. Robinson emphasizes worship and the Eucharist as central to the life of the church when he says:

The cell-Church, being the Church as it is in the house, must reproduce the whole life of the Body, all the "marks" of catholicity--the Apostle's teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers. The first and the last, in the form of groups for Bible study and prayer, are well accepted marks of the Church in the cell. What I want to say will be concerned solely with the second--namely, the breaking of the bread. For the Eucharist is, par excellence, the pattern-action of the Church, that by which the Koinonia is constituted and by which it is to be recognized, whether it be in a cathedral or a Gestapo prison. One should not be able to come across the Community at any level without finding the Communion.<sup>10</sup>

It is when the Eucharist is really taken back into life that we shall rediscover the relevancy of our faith. Robinson concludes by suggesting that all this must be seen as a theological rediscovery.

It is not merely a technique for getting people into the Church, vitally important as it is at that. The cell is itself the Church, the Church in the basement, at the molecular level, in the smallest possible unit of Christian existence, whether it be among the dockers at Corinth or theological students at Wells.<sup>11</sup>

Such a theological orientation has led to experimentation on several levels at Halton. To those we now turn.

#### IV. THE INTENSIVE HOUSE CHURCH

There can be no false separation between liturgy and society; between the sacred and the secular. The Communion service is meant to be a means of Christ's reclaiming of the whole of life.

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 72-73.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 74.



We see the Church most characteristically herself when she meets to break bread. Members of the Church are never more their true selves than at the Communion service; this is the most manly thing any one can do. Here we offer and present ourselves, our souls and bodies to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice.<sup>12</sup>

For the baptized Christian this is paramount. The distinguishing characteristic about us is that we are baptized. In being baptized and belonging to the church we find our vocation. In our vocation our main calling is to go out into the world to serve God faithfully. This involves relating the church to everyone and everything. Our membership in the church and our Christian profession is expressed most characteristically in Holy Communion. It is in the Communion that the holy and the common are brought together.

Thus a pattern developed at Halton of celebrating Communion at the church on Sunday and moving out into the parish for celebrations in houses. At first, Communion was celebrated in two houses each morning for three mornings a week, along with a daily celebration in church. From Lent, 1955, daily celebrations began to take place in the homes.

The following explanation in Canon Southcott's own words gives one the feeling of participation.

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

In people's houses we celebrate in surplice and stole (we use vestments in the church building), with the people gathered round the family table. The rite used is the 1662 without the Creed and Gloria and with the Prayer of Oblation following the Prayer of Consecration. Since October, 1952, we have had a sermon at every celebration including the regular daily celebration, whether in the church as it used to be or in the houses as it is now: here is a link between the worship of Sunday and that of the weekday, for on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday in the sermon we look forward to next Sunday's collect, epistle, and gospel respectively, and on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday in the sermon we look back in the same way. In the house we use the vessels and wine from the church building and water and bread from the house. Each person puts his own bread on the paten and we say together the offertory Sentence: we also say together the Collect for Purity, the Prayer of Humble Access, and the Prayer of Oblation. We sit for most of the service, but stand for the gospel and offertory and from the Sursum Corda until after the Lord's Prayer. When it is done, and how it is done, is secondary to what is done; the Holy Communion in houses, the breaking of the bread at a more local level than the parish church.<sup>13</sup>

In so doing people have testified to the feeling that now their home was really a part of God's world. People are sensing anew the connection between the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ and their daily existence as the church in their home becomes a reality. The congregation also realizes that those who are not able to come to church for one reason or another are still their brothers and sisters in Christ. At least one sick person has never been able to come to the church although

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

it was consecrated seventeen years ago. And yet she feels very much an integral part of the church. This is because she has regularly received Communion reserved at the Parish Communion on Sunday morning, and has been hostess to several house celebrations with gatherings of church people around her bed. Ordinarily the coming of the priest with Communion to the bedside has signaled the end of life. But here the church is present in miniature to celebrate Communion, friends and neighbors with their sick friend and in a very real way they become a healing fellowship as well as a worshipping congregation. When members of the church come to join in the service of Communion in a home, they are the fellowship of the church. The sick Communion household can be a real center of church life.

There is a close relationship between the worshipping fellowship and the ministry of healing which Canon Southcott explains as follows:

We need to surround our beds of sickness with faith. We need to surround our death beds with faith. I believe we need bands of people who are prepared to meet in the church building or in homes to pray for those who are sick. We need people who are prepared to be trained to visit the sick and expound the Bible and cooperate in the laying on of hands. We need, above all, to help patient's relations and friends to see their vocation as healers, to see their vocation to surround the sick bed by faith and prayer and not by hopeless or stoical sorrow.

The Church is a healing fellowship and the vocation of the Christian congregation is to build up the right

attitude of faith, hope, and charity, so that Christ can heal to-day.<sup>14</sup>

The more that people see that membership is fulfilled in communicant membership, the more people will see the Communion service as the center of their lives. As people see the Communion service at the center of their lives week by week they will not want to be without it, on special occasions as well as on ordinary occasions.

These are illustrations of what is called intensive house church in Halton. It is the congregation meeting in dispersion to celebrate Communion and be trained by the Holy Spirit at this local level.

#### V. THE EXTENSIVE HOUSE CHURCH

At Halton the extensive house church is used to describe meetings with or without celebrations in the homes of people who are not regular worshippers. These meetings are to bring the church to the houses of the lapsed baptized, and to develop a sense of mission on the part of the congregation as they gather in such a home. The church needs to get alongside and on speaking terms with those who are outside the worshipping community. This enables the congregation to start where the parishioners are.

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

It has been discovered over and over again that many adults have never seen a Communion service before. Thus they could hardly be expected to come to church and participate in the service. By seeing the service in the simplicity of a home they begin to understand its meaning and relevance to life. The same has been true of the simple liturgical service conducted in homes of members and non-members for the people of the street.

No longer is the life of the congregation equated with what happens at the church building. The life of the congregation is what happens up and down the streets of Halton. As Southcott wrote:

The congregation is not allowed to think of itself as just a group of people who go to a church building.<sup>15</sup>

Going into homes for worship and Communion are not the only expressions of the house church. Many meetings are held principally for discussion. The range of discussions are endless, from a filmstrip on Holy Communion to a discussion of politics, taxes, Baptism, the bazaar, or the public lavatories at the train terminal. Members and non-members share in such home discussions in a way that is not possible at church or in the parish hall.

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 66.

## VI. EDUCATION THROUGH THE HOUSE CHURCH

One of the most important aims in the work of the church is to help the congregation feel that the Church's children are their children. Everyone in the congregation shares jointly in a responsibility to place the children of the church in the kind of environment in which they can grow to Christian maturity. Many of the young couples of Halton had not been regular in worship or Communion when they presented children for baptism. This only heightened the responsibility of the congregation. So it was felt that the church should go to such young families if they did not come to the church.

Whenever the celebration of Communion is held in a home, children are always encouraged to be present. In this way they become familiar with the prayers, the cross and candles, the elements. They see the parish priest take the bread and wine in the prayer of consecration. They see the people holding up their hands to receive Holy Communion. They grow accustomed to hearing the Word of God read and preached. They become familiar with the words of the service. It is no longer something foreign to them. Perhaps in this way they are learning more about what the church is and what the church does than in any other way.

It seemed only a natural step from the home

celebration of Communion with children present, to a Sunday school in the house. The parish Sunday school was not discontinued but multitudes of children were not attending. By taking the Sunday school up and down the streets in homes across the parish, the church was really taking its mission from the building to the people. Many children have been drawn in who had no contact with the parish church. This contact with the home through the children is helping the congregation gain a new sense of mission.

Since 1954 all the Confirmation classes have been taking place in homes, both adult classes as well as children's classes. Occasional house celebrations of Communion offered a visual reminder of God's claim on all lives. With a background of barking dogs or whistling kettles the discussions of the meaning of the faith got to the heart of life's questions. House Confirmation classes have not cut off the candidates from the fellowship of the church. On several occasions there have been celebrations of Communion at the classes and people have come to share in Communion and meet the candidates. This has surely enhanced the meaning of the church's fellowship for all.

How does the church educate? At Halton it has been found that house Communion, house Sunday school, house service, and house Confirmation, in addition to the church

service and church Sunday school, have been most effective. All of these have given the people the opportunity to be the church on their own street. In this sense they have all become a fellowship of learners.

## VII. SUMMARY

The church intends its work and worship to be addressed to God. However, it is too often measured by the pleasure it gives to those who take part in its services. If the work and worship of the church are done for God, certain results will follow. Men will begin to see that the gospel which the church proclaims touches their life in all its aspects. The parish meeting on a political issue for example, reminds us of what the church ought to be doing. It is not enough to simply say that people must come to church. The church must also come to the people. Grimes summarizes this emphasis succinctly in saying:

The house church is an attempt to move the locus of the Church's life partly out of the church building into the homes of members and other interested people. It is an effort to recover the sense of community which constituted the New Testament Church, in terms of people rather than buildings.<sup>16</sup>

A regular gathering outside the church building seems vital. Why? Because parish worship or the personal

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<sup>16</sup>Howard Grimes, The Rebirth of the Laity (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 120.



piety of individual Christians is inadequate to cope with the problems of today or offer an effective witness to the world. Southcott expresses it this way:

As these groups develop more and more, the needs of the world and the needs of the parish will be united in a common concern, a common concern that the Body of Christ should extend the kingdom of God on earth, a common concern to link the local congregation to the parish community, and out and out to the uttermost part of the earth.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Southcott, op. cit., p. 151.

## CHAPTER V

### THE RENEWAL GROUPS

#### I. THE NEED TO RENEW THE CHURCH

In each generation there is a real need for the church to take stock and see if she is performing her mission. Much concern over the loss of a sense of mission pervades many areas of the church today. In New Life in the Church, Robert Raines devotes the entire first chapter of his book to "The Loss of Mission."<sup>1</sup>

The church has accomodated herself to the cultural climate in which she finds herself. Having become too success conscious, the church has sought to save herself, to build herself up in terms of worldly statue and power. As Raines puts it:

The church is afraid of her mission, and well she might be. Her mission is to lose her life in the world, that her life and the world's life may be saved.<sup>2</sup>

This has caused the average church member to lose his sense of individual mission in the world. He does not see himself as one of Christ's chosen witnesses in the world. He accepts the conditions of life in the world with

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<sup>1</sup>Robert A. Raines, New Life in the Church (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), pp. 13-19.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 16-17.

little thought that these conditions ought to be changed. He has little idea that as a Christian he is called to be an agent of God's reconciling changes. Thus the church, embodied in the individual or in the group, has difficulty being the voice of God to these times.

People of the church are seeking something more than they have found from the church. It is difficult to always determine what the "more" is. Stated simply, church people are: (1) hungry for community and (2) anxious to become literate Christians. The first is what Raines and others have described as koinonia. This is the Greek word from the New Testament usually translated "fellowship." However, such fellowship is more than friendliness or gregariousness. It is fellowship in Christ. Partnership of participation adds another necessary dimension to the meaning of koinonia as community or fellowship. The second is an earnest desire to better understand the Christian faith. Such koinonia and literacy is being found in such places as Aldersgate Church, Cleveland, where the Reverend Robert Raines was pastor at the time the renewal groups were begun. The story of these koinonia groups is to be the story of this chapter.

## II. DISCIPLINES FOR RENEWAL

Essential to renewal, either individual or corporate, is the necessity of discipline. A Christian to grow must have some habits of obedience by which to live. Raines lists six such disciplines<sup>3</sup> or "grooves of grace" as he calls them.

The first discipline is that of corporate worship. To be a part of the believing community, the Body of Christ, implies corporate worship. If one is to live the Christian life he must gather with fellow believers for the administration of the sacraments and the preaching of the Word of God.

The second discipline is daily prayer. God's guidance is needed daily. The need to forgive and be forgiven occurs daily. Gratitude and thanksgiving are daily requirements for the Christian. All these necessitate daily prayer.

The third discipline is Bible reading and study. The Bible provides the correctives for one's own religious opinions. People grow in the knowledge of God as they expose themselves to the events in which He revealed Himself, as recorded in the Bible. Too many church members are

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 59-64.

biblically illiterate. They may know some verses or some biblical stories but have not been captured by the mighty acts of God.

These first three disciplines indicate the opening of self to receive the grace of God. The next three indicate ways in which such grace is shared with others.

The fourth discipline is the giving of money. The world suffers from poverty and need. To love a neighbor in the world requires tangible financial help.

The fifth discipline is service. Christ calls his followers to a life of serving others. He showed what he meant by taking the menial task of washing the feet of His disciples. To serve means to find one's vocation. The Protestant idea of vocation is that every Christian is called to serve God through his work and all his relationships.

The sixth discipline is witness. Not many church people enjoy giving any kind of personal testimony. They do not know how to share their faith effectively. They are afraid of being labeled as fanatics. Only as Christians witness in the church and in the world can the church regain her sense of mission.

In commenting on these disciplines of Raines, Howard Grimes says this:

Generally speaking, Protestants have feared exterior means of attesting to and supporting one's faith, rightly fearing the church which controls the life of its members. Increasingly within recent years, however, many have rediscovered the necessity of voluntarily assuming certain disciplines which serve both as expression of one's faith and, at the same time, as means of strengthening faith.<sup>4</sup>

### III. THE ROAD TO RENEWAL--KOINONIA

If koinonia is the road to renewal, then a more adequate description of koinonia is now in order. Koinonia is the Greek word meaning participation with someone in something. The New Testament gives it particular meaning in a Christian frame of reference. Howard Grimes describes it thus:

It is the quality of life which comes into being in the quiet searching of a group for the meaning of life, of a group joined together in a common project in the Spirit of Christ, of a total congregation as it faces the problems of human existence in the Spirit of its Lord and Master. It is thus no human invention, no result of the manipulation of people by the use of group techniques, no automatic reality for church people met together for worship, for eating, for business; it is essentially due to the coming of the Spirit of God into the midst of folk who corporately open their lives to him.<sup>5</sup>

"Koinonia," says Raines, "requires personal participation and mutual sharing with others. This is possible only in small groups."<sup>6</sup> However, smallness in and of

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<sup>4</sup>Howard Grimes, The Rebirth of the Laity (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 165.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 34. <sup>6</sup>Raines, op. cit., p. 69.

itself is no guarantee of koinonia as can be readily seen in the description given above. When koinonia is known, it is because a group are usually doing and sharing some specific things together. Raines discusses these specific things "as a norm for the sharing of koinonia"<sup>7</sup> and uses the practice of the early Christians described in the second chapter of Acts as such as the norm: "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Acts 2:42.)

The Apostles' teaching was the witness of those who had known Jesus or had heard firsthand stories about Him. From this came a spelling out of the Christian way of life as has been recorded in the New Testament. Adapted to present day church life this would mean a study of the Bible, especially the New Testament.

The Apostles' fellowship was a sharing of life, later described in the book of Acts as including economic sharing. This has been difficult to interpret or adapt into the practice of the church in our time.

The breaking of bread was the sharing of Communion. This was the distinctive act of Christian worship in the early church from the very beginning. The day of the

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

resurrection, Sunday, was the chosen day of the week for this celebration. It highlighted the presence of the risen Christ as well as re-enacting the death of Jesus.

The prayers included the prayer life which fellow believers shared together.

These are the ingredients which provide the context for koinonia in the early church. To translate and adapt these ingredients to church life today is what Pastor Raines and the people of Aldersgate attempted to do. Raines describes their plan of action in these words:

Strategies change with changing circumstances. A small group is necessary for this kind of personal and mutual encouragement. The strategy for our time is the small-group approach.<sup>8</sup>

He continues later:

Today there is a return to the small-group fellowship within the church. It is the medium through which God has evidently chosen to work in powerful and permanent ways to help people start growing and continue to grow in Christ.<sup>9</sup>

The term koinonia groups is preferred because of the limited and narrowed concerns signified in study groups or prayer groups although the purpose and intent may be the same. Though the norm for koinonia in the New Testament included the four elements from Acts mentioned previously, Raines sees the study of the Bible as uniquely

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 79.



important for our time.

Bible study is crucial, not as an academic exercise in biblical facts, but as the concrete way in which uninformed persons may together seek the God of the Bible.<sup>10</sup>

Reappropriation of the biblical message has historically been integral to the significant awakenings in the history of the church. Second, the study of the Bible provides the determinative substance of the fellowship of the small group which nothing else can provide. It provides the authoritative content of the faith. The third reason is quite pragmatic. Bible study is the best way to get large numbers of people into small groups.

Firsthand knowledge of the Bible is essential to being a Christian. Based on this premise and after experimentation by several groups a regular two-year cycle of study was set up for beginning groups. These were based on a group meeting twice a month for nine months of the year, breaking off in the summer and starting again in the fall. If the group met weekly it would cover the same material in a year. Each group usually started with an introduction to the Bible or a survey of the Bible so that principles of interpretation could first be worked out. Then a group was invited to study the Gospel according to

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

Mark with the aid of a good commentary. Accompanying this study was usually a theological study of Christ which provoked much discussion.

Then the group moved to the exciting book of Acts and encounters with the Holy Spirit as he appears throughout the book. This leads to some interpretation and understanding of the significance of the church.

Completing the first year of study here, a group has now had an introduction to the Bible, the life, death, and resurrection of Christ and the birth and growth of the early church.

The second year of study begins with the Letters of Paul, again accompanied with good commentaries and various translations of the text. The letter to the Ephesians provides the basis for a study of the nature and mission of the church. Galatians becomes the foundation for a systematic theology study supplemented by other text books. The two-year cycle concludes with the reading of First Corinthians as the basis for formulating Christian ethics.

Some groups, of course, continue on to study new areas or concentrate with greater depth in some area already explored. Resources of good books as the basis of the study are always suggested. The testimony of the groups is that "fellowship in Christ" came as an unexpected dividend of meeting for Bible study.

VI. GUIDELINES FOR KOINONIA GROUPS

For many people, the church is merely an activity instead of a way of life. They have been taught to be busy in the activities of the church but have failed to grasp what it means to be the church. Raines expresses it this way:

Many of our most highly educated and thoughtful people simply cannot love God with their minds because they have not been led to grapple as adults with the problems and questions which have come to them as adults. Clearly the conventional Sunday School cannot cope with this matter. New and different forms of adult study are imperative. The koinonia group is indicated.<sup>11</sup>

In the koinonia group it is hoped that people will be led to a personal knowledge of God, will learn to apply their faith to everyday life, and will be prepared for their mission of witnessing in the world. This idea is expressed in these words:

Koinonia is always expulsive, driving one deep into the being of the Church, and then driving one out into the world to fulfill the mission of the Church.<sup>12</sup>

Within such groups Christians are being equipped for the work of ministry, both in the church and in the world. Raines lists nine guidelines for koinonia groups based on the experience of the groups at Aldersgate church. The

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

following is a summary of these guidelines.<sup>13</sup>

1. Don't deliberately structure groups around similar interests, experiences and age levels. Differing background and experience can bring real enrichment to a group.

2. Don't raise every question in the book. Problems and questions should arise naturally from the group in the context of their study. The leader or minister should beware raising questions which may not currently disturb the group.

3. Don't lecture; lead a discussion. A provocative question based on the text being studied will often be all that is needed to begin a discussion. Discussion should be in a normal spontaneous fashion with each member being permitted to enter in.

4. Learn to share prayer. To many people, prayer is frustrating, especially in the presence of other people. The procedure of sentence prayers is helpful. If someone has no prayer to offer, he says "Amen." This allows opportunity for every person to participate, but takes the pressure off also. Sharing of prayer can be of great importance in a group.

5. Try shared lay leadership. When a new group is

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 98-100.

started, someone from a previous koinonia group is encouraged to help lead. As leadership emerges in the new group, it is encouraged.

6. Don't expect a group to continue forever. Some groups last several years, others should be stopped when their usefulness is at an end.

7. Group discipline is useful. A group should decide on a specific number of meetings to give it a chance. They should also agree on lesson material and each one's intent to prepare. Further discipline may be discussed as the group develops.

8. Not everyone will be helped in these groups. Every person cannot be expected to respond to or have their need met in such a group. Some will drop out. Others will find it the most life-changing experience of their lives.

9. How does one start a koinonia group? A group should always be started with the cooperation of the minister. Several concerned people can simply invite several others to a meeting and propose a study together.

## V. SUMMARY

The most significant outcome of the koinonia groups is the emerging lay ministry. Raines explains it in these words:

Koinonia known in the church becomes koinonia shared in the world. The lay ministry emerges in the church, and the church begins to be leaven in the world. Slowly the church becomes God's new creation, and recovers her mission to the world.<sup>14</sup>

This may cause a re-examination of the structure of the local church. If significant personal changes seldom occur in crowds, then programming that tends toward larger numbers must be questioned. When people expend their energy to keep the organizational wheels of the church going, they have little time to grow in mind and spirit. Some old structures in the churches may have to die, in order that new structures may come into being more consistent with the church's mission. The chief task of the clergyman in this changing scene is to equip the people for their ministry to each other and to the world.

Koinonia groups are not just for the purpose of renewing the life of the church. Renewal of the church comes when people's lives are renewed. Therefore, primary concern is always for people, not for groups. The group must always be based on interest and need. Imposing a group on unprepared people will inevitably lead to dismal failure.

There seems to be much historic precedent for the present renewal groups. Among these one can recall the Twelve, the "cells" of the primitive church, The Orders in

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

the medieval church, and the class meetings of the Wesleyan Revival.

Buttrick summarizes the importance of the small group saying:

All the great movements in Christianity have been based on the training of small groups. The implication of this for the church is overwhelming. It is the charter of Christian education and of family religion.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>George A. Buttrick, "Matthew: Exposition," The Interpreter's Bible, VII, 686.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CHURCH OF THE SAVIOR

#### I. THE BEGINNING

The Church of the Savior was established in October, 1947, by Gordon Cosby, a young Air Force chaplain. Cosby had been ordained a Baptist minister before the war. Being dissatisfied with the churches he knew, he determined that if he returned, he would establish a church in which total commitment to the will of God in every area of life would be the accepted obligation of every member.

The idea in Cosby's mind was a church that would be nondenominational, but ecumenical, in the mainstream of evnagelical Christianity. It would be composed of a group of people who would give unqualified allegiance to Jesus Christ. In order to have freedom to experiment, the church would exist outside the denominations, but in no sense be sectarian. The question was this: Is it possible, in the twentieth century, working with people recently turned from secularism or from merely nominal Christianity, to create conditions under which the Living Christ could manifest himself as he did when the church was young? Through total commitment, conscientious discipline, group study and worship they would try to bring into being a dynamic fellowship, and a redemptive fellowship. William Ham writes of



the experience of fellowship in the early church as the basis of the fellowship for the Church of the Savior:

That first group fellowship, like those that came after it, was animated by a spirit of love and of loyalty. "They devoted themselves to the instruction given by the apostles to the fellowship, breaking bread, and praying together," (Acts 2:42). Out of that came tremendous spiritual power. Their fellowship was not merely a fellowship among themselves, nor was it a fellowship of believers individually with God. Their attitude toward God was reflected in their attitude toward their Christian brethren, and their attitude toward their Christian brethren was patterned after God's attitude to them. They loved others as Christ had loved them--not for the sake of being loved in return, but in order to help others to win salvation. They loved redemptively.<sup>1</sup>

With the support of his wife, Mary, her sister, and six other persons who signed the commitment of membership, the church was begun in the tiny chapel at 1717 Nineteenth Street, N.W., in Washington, D.C. After three years at this address, the congregation, including a church membership now numbering nineteen members moved to its present quarters at 2025 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. Today the total membership is about seventy.

The new church was called "The Church of the Savior" for three reasons. First, the name proclaimed a basic Christian tenet; second, it spoke of a spiritual function; third, it indicated that this was not an interfaith group,

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<sup>1</sup>William T. Ham, "Candles of the Lord," in John L. Casteel (ed.), Spiritual Renewal Through Personal Groups (New York: Association Press, 1957), p. 168.

but solely Christian. The emphasis was upon carrying the Good News to pagans and the unchurched, to people without any training or affiliation, in language intelligible to modern ears. From the beginning a School of Christian Living was set up, meeting on Friday evenings, for instruction in Christian thought and ways of life.

The constitution of the church as outlined at the first meeting stated that:

The Church of the Savior will endeavor to enter into full fellowship and cooperation with all Christian groups and denominations. It will seek a close relationship and affiliation, where possible with all organizations and movements representing united or cooperating Christian churches, such as the local and the National Council of Churches. It will seek to be subject to the will of the universal Church in so far as this will be expressed by such representatives and organizations. In particular, it will seek to promote, to be in association and fellowship with, and to be subject to the World Council of Churches as the representation and expression of Christianity throughout the world.

The Church of the Savior is to be regarded as a part or unit of Christ's Church, with a distinctive worship, practice and belief among its own constituents, while remaining true to the basic values in the stream of historic evangelical Christianity; attempting to bear a unique witness of spiritual power, while at the same time recognizing the validity, the integrity, and the rights of self-determination of all Christian groups and denominations. It is considered, however, that an obligation rests upon all such groups and denominations to surrender to the sovereignty and will of Christ as these are expressed through the voice of the ecumenical Church in our day.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Elizabeth O'Connor, Call to Commitment (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 18.

On the door of the old Victorian mansion is an appropriate plaque announcing "Headquarters of the Church of the Savior," indicative of the fact that the church is not a building, but people.

## II. THE MEANING OF MEMBERSHIP

From the beginning, the congregation has grappled with the issue of entrance into the church. The profound meanings of membership needed to be rethought. O'Connor suggests their thinking in writing:

Surely entrance into the Christian Church presupposes total commitment to Christ as the Lord of the Church. A surrender to Christ is a surrender to His people--total involvement in the life of the church and the awareness that participation in this community of forgiveness and love means that we must extend it to all mankind.<sup>3</sup>

The refusal to grapple with the meaning of membership into the Christian Church is not tolerance; it is betrayal of the gospel. There must be an integrity of membership if there is to be an effective witness or an enduring fellowship.

If the church is to have integrity of membership, a framework must be provided prior to membership in which a person may explore the Christian faith with seriousness. He must find acceptance and be able to enter into deep

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

person-to-person relationships.

For the Church of the Savior this framework is provided by the School of Christian Living to be described more fully later in this chapter. In the school, six courses are offered which are required for membership in the church. The required courses are considered basic to an understanding of the Christian faith. They include: Old Testament, New Testament, Doctrine, Ethics, Christian Growth, and Stewardship.

William Ham explains the discipline expected of members when he says:

The Church of the Savior has established a minimum discipline beyond which it is assumed each member will advance as far and as fast as he is able. This minimum discipline calls for: (1) daily prayer; (2) weekly worship; (3) daily study of the Scriptures; (4) membership in a fellowship group or participation in the educational program; (5) tithing, as a minimum stewardship program; (6) daily expression of Christian love in redeeming service. Discipline, it is emphasized, is of no value as an end in itself, but only as a means to a greater good.<sup>4</sup>

Maturing and deepening of spiritual life is not spontaneous. People grow as they make purposeful responses to life and to the grace of God. Thus, the discipline becomes a stimulus to the continued growth of those who become members.

Those who move through the School of Christian

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<sup>4</sup>Ham, op. cit., p. 171.

Living and feel the call of God to belong to this particular expression of His Church are asked to prepare a paper. The paper is to include:<sup>5</sup>

- (1) A statement telling what Christ means to the applicant in his personal experience.
- (2) A statement on his present spiritual discipline, naming those practiced regularly, and for how long.
- (3) A statement on those areas of his life which are obviously unchristian and in which help is needed.
- (4) A statement on whatever specific task he is doing for the Church of the Savior, the length of time he has carried this responsibility, and other work which he feels called to do.

The paper is presented to the Council, the governing body, which appoints a sponsor. The sponsor may function for six weeks or longer. Usually the two meet together weekly for study, following a prepared syllabus. The membership commitment is memorized line by line and the disciplines of membership are discussed thoroughly.

The formal reception into the membership of the Church of the Savior is on a Sunday morning when a person stands with his sponsor and recites the

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<sup>5</sup>O'Connor, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

commitment. Here is formalized what has usually taken place months before. One has become a part of a people with whom the whole of life is bound--a fellowship where all the members are necessary to one another as the eye is to the hand, and as close as, and more intimate than, the members of a family. This is what will mark the church of Christ as different.<sup>6</sup>

A total commitment of the person is expected. He must commit himself unreservedly to Christ and give Him priority in all the affairs of life. He must also be willing to commit himself, regardless of expenditures of time, energy and money, to becoming an informed, mature Christian. Preparation for membership also includes working in some branch of mission of the church.

Each year, usually in the autumn, the members of the Church of the Savior are asked to review past experiences, and, after a searching self-examination, to renew the commitment of unequivocal loyalty to Christ and the Christian fellowship. If, for any reason, a member feels that he cannot conscientiously renew his pledge, he is free to withdraw from the membership, and to play such part in the activities of the church as he thinks best.

The purpose of this annual recommitment is to furnish a regular opportunity for personal evaluation of one's religious experience and one's seriousness of intention, in the light of the aims to which he pledged

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

himself. It also serves to assure that the membership is always made up of totally committed persons. One can only speculate about the drastic consequences of such a discipline in the average church today.

The membership commitment follows:

I come today to join a local expression of the Church, which is the body of those on whom the call of God rests to witness to the grace and truth of God.

I recognize that the function of the Church is to glorify God in adoration and sacrificial service, and to be God's missionary to the world, bearing witness to God's redeeming grace in Jesus Christ.

I believe as did Peter that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

I unreservedly and with abandon commit my life and destiny to Christ, promising to give Him a practical priority in all the affairs of life. I will seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness.

I commit myself, regardless of the expenditures of time, energy, and money to becoming an informed, mature Christian.

I believe that God is the total owner of my life and resources. I give God the throne in relation to the material aspect of my life. God is the owner. I am the owner. Because God is a lavish giver I too shall be lavish and cheerful in my regular gifts.

I will seek to bring every phase of my life under the Lordship of Christ.

When I move from this place I will join some other expression of the Christian Church.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>"The Church of the Savior" (Washington, D.C.: The Church of the Savior), p. 15.

### III. THE SCHOOL OF CHRISTIAN LIVING

The School of Christian Living prepares one for membership in the church. Such preparation is also one of the functions of the mission groups. The School also offers elective courses for those who are already members.

Various members teach courses in the School. Each course is planned to lead to the most decisive choice of all: total commitment to Christ. Required courses for membership preparation are divided into six categories: Old Testament, New Testament, Christian Doctrine, Christian Ethics, Christian Growth, and Stewardship. Elective courses have included: Interpretive Speech, Counseling, the Christian Classics, History of the Church, Prayer, and Group Dynamics.

The School is held each Friday evening. Everyone who enrolls in a class is expected to attend regularly and punctually and to perform faithfully all the requirements. Those who wish to audit a class must have the permission of the instructor.

A typical evening of School begins with dinner at 6:45 p.m.--the dinner hour is considered an integral part of the program of evangelism. Dinners are usually attended by fifty or more, and are prepared by participants in the School who take turns and help make it a festive time.



Dinner is followed by a worship period in the chapel, which is led by a member. Classes meet from 8:00 a.m. until 9:30 a.m. They are usually limited to twenty members although twelve or less seems to be more effective. This size allows the teacher to shepherd his students and allows members of the class to know each other and to participate in the discussion. Those completing membership preparation in the School then submit their paper to the Council as previously explained.

#### IV. THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

The Church School at the Church of the Savior is directed primarily toward the children of parents who are actively involved in the life of the church. The aim of the school is to achieve a sense of belonging among the children as will give reality to the lesson content. A child is not enrolled in the school unless he has a parent or sponsor who will make this commitment:

I will attend the School of Christian Living or take part in another mission of the church.

I will bring my child to church school each Sunday.

I will work with him on his weekly assignment and communicate with his teacher weekly, either in writing or orally.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>O'Connor, op. cit., p. 76.

The children's program assumes that the home is the essential social unit of the Christian church. This is explained by the following statement:

We insist on the participation of at least one parent in the life of the church because we believe the child cannot enter into a faith that is being denied by the people who are most significant to him. Children pick up more from the home atmosphere than from anything they might be told on a Sunday morning at church school. It is at home that it is made difficult or easy for them to rest back in the grace of God, to believe or disbelieve in love. The home is the outpost of the Christian Church in the world and it is here that the church succeeds or fails, according to the faithfulness of those involved.<sup>9</sup>

Classes are limited to eight in order that the teacher may know each pupil and his family. Communication between parents and teachers takes place in various ways. Sometimes the teacher meets with all the parents of her pupils. Sometimes the mothers and teachers participate in a retreat. At other times there may be a conference with individual parents to discuss how they can work together to communicate the Good News to the child.

Teachers are asked to make a commitment as follows:

(1) To accept the children and families of my class as my "flock," praying for them and communicating with them regularly.

(2) To be willing to learn to use the selected materials and study and prepare my class lessons weekly.

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

(3) To attend the Teacher's Training Class regularly and do the study required.<sup>10</sup>

Adults are not asked to transmit to children a faith they do not have. To the Church of the Savior, this means that at some time there may not be any classes for a particular age group if a qualified teacher is not available.

Teachers and parents who have a special interest in Christian Education are a mission group. They meet once a week for worship, study and discussion. The church has experimented with various church school curricula including the Seabury Press materials, Presbyterian Faith and Life, and the Character Research Project literature of Dr. Ernest Ligon. At present the group is drawing up a philosophy of Christian education so a curriculum can be adapted to meet their own particular needs.

Another way the Church maintains a relationship with the family is through godparents. They provide an important bridge between the child and the larger fellowship. Consideration has been given to allowing teenagers to select their own godparents who will serve as their spiritual directors.

At present, Sunday morning classes extend through

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

the tenth grade. One course of the School of Christian Living has been offered eleventh graders on an experimental basis. The youth program for Junior high and high school students now includes retreats at Dayspring. Additional experimentation is needed to cover the years between the effective children's program and full participation in the adult program.

#### V. THE MISSION GROUPS

Origin and purpose. A mission group is composed of two to thirty people who believe themselves to be called by God to be the church in some specific area of the world. This means that they will be the church among people who are not of the church. While each person is considered as a minister, the group is to be on mission together. Therefore the mission group has a Prior or Spiritual Director who has administrative authority and who is responsible to the Church Council.

The present mission groups are the outgrowth of former fellowship groups which were composed of six to twelve persons. Various groupings have been explored for emphasis on prayer, study, deepening spiritual life, and other areas. At present the emphasis is upon an awareness of mission. Prayer and study have an even larger place in the lives of the members than formerly, in the groups, but

are now more directly channeled into areas of service.

Most of the mission groups have a weekly meeting in addition to their engagement in service. This weekly meeting is divided into three parts: a worship time, a study time, and a time of sharing. Again, discipline is essential to the program. O'Connor explains it this way:

As members of a mission group we need to be disciplined and we need to be willing to require a discipline of those who would be on mission with us. No person or group or movement has vigor and power unless it is disciplined.<sup>11</sup>

Because members have a shepherding responsibility towards nonmembers and are at the same time responsible for the mission, it is important to maintain a proper ratio between members and nonmembers in the group. A committed core can properly care for only a limited number while it is on mission.

The mission group has two functions; first to serve the world redemptively, and second, to nurture the spiritual growth of its members. These two functions must be kept in balance. A mission group cannot be concerned merely with social action. A group cannot withdraw from the world in pursuit of its own spiritual welfare. The group must be the church and therefore not of the world. At the same time it must be redemptively at work in the world.

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 128.

Discipline, again, is the clue. O'Connor writes of it in this way:

After the meeting times of a group have been decided on, they are no longer optional with us. It is elementary that there will be full attendance, although again we need often to remind each other of this. A little thing like two or three people attending spasmodically for a short time can finish a mission. It says something profound which has the potential of damaging a group. If a member needs to be consistently late or absent because of other covenant relations, this is something the membership is told about and consents to. If a person is providentially prevented from being present, his reason ought to be impressive enough for nonmembers to see it is an emergency. One cannot do the work of a group on mission unless he is with the group for its time of prayer, study, and fellowship. The fellowship gathered is not a means to an end. It is the end. It is the reason for which the mission exists. We simply want others to belong to this community in Christ, which knows that worship and prayer as well as service is essential to its life.<sup>12</sup>

To meet the need for structured study, each member of one mission group agreed to outline a six-month program of individual study. These programs reflected the great diversity of interests within the group, and gave some indication of how rich and varied the study life of a group can be when each member has the support and encouragement to pursue his own special interest. Time was given so reports on studies could be made. The individual study thus edified the whole group, and the group provided a stimulant and check for the members sharing their

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 132.

research.

During the past year the following mission groups were functioning at the Church of the Savior, The Potter's House, the Dayspring Group, The Potter's House Workshop, The Life Renewal Center, The Rockville House Congregation, The Library Group, and The Association.

The Potter's House. The Potter's House opened its doors in April 1960, after nearly two years of planning and of search for an appropriate location. The idea was to have a coffee shop of such a pleasing character that people who would seldom or never go to church would be attracted and there be led to ask religious questions. Accordingly, much attention was given to lighting and decor, with the result that the Potter's House has become a favorite spot for the exhibition of the work of Washington artists. Each evening of the week a different group of people, church members and nonmembers, assumes responsibility for service to the public. Each of these acts as a small mission group and meets at 6:45 p.m. for an hour of worship and study before opening the doors to patrons at 8:00 p.m. Many of these persons are members of the church, living under the church's commitment. However, the Potter's House mission group has an additional Rule of the Members:

Friend, you declare by your membership in the Congregation of the Potter's House that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has called you to belong to Him, has called you also to be on mission to His world through this venture of His church. As the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah saying, "Go down to the potter's house and there I will cause you to hear my word," so from on high must you have heard this voice, watched the potter at his work, seen how the clay was spoiled in his hand and how he took it and made another vessel as seemed good to him to do; and then heard deep within, God saying, "Friend, can I not do with you as the potter has done? Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand." Your life is to be so yielded to the hand of the Potter that you shall be to those who gather in the Potter's House the bearer of this message, a witness to God's redeeming love in Jesus Christ.<sup>13</sup>

Associate membership is for those who are not yet members of the Church of the Savior but who have had two or more courses in its School of Christian Living and who share the church's life and spirit as well as the mission of the Potter's House. The Rule of the Potter's House is:

You declare by your associate membership in the Congregation of the Potter's House your hunger for God in Christ and your belief that you can best come to know Him as you share in the common life of his people. You no longer belong to the number of those who have never heard the words of Christ nor touched the words of Christ. The Congregation of the Potter's House is part of His Body. Christ is the head of this people. He is in the midst of them, but He is also out yonder in His world. To share in the common life of this community is to share in a life of worship, prayer, and study--a life of loving and giving.<sup>14</sup>

There is another category of supporting members. In this group are those who help with the staffing once a

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 123.



month or those who are on emergency call. The members in this category usually have a primary commitment to another group.

Always there is good coffee and opportunity for conversation. Often there is special entertainment, such as one-act plays, folk singing, or a short vocal or piano recital. The Potter's House aims to be a thrust of the church into the world. It is one of the ways in which those who have called to be fishers of men cast their nets, to be servants.

The Dayspring Group. In the summer of 1953, the Church of the Savior ventured anew. It bought a farm of 168 acres (since increased to 175) in the beautiful Maryland countryside some twenty-five miles from the District of Columbia. The farm was named Dayspring from a passage of Scripture: "The dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace . . ." (Luke 1:78-79.) It was envisioned as a place where people could get away from the rush of city life. They could work and play together and meet in retreat for the refreshment of their spiritual life and renewal of their commitment to God.

One mission group has responsibility for Dayspring. During recent years trees and shrubs have been planted for

shade and fruit. A pond has been formed and stocked with fish, and trails have been cleared through the seventy-eight acres of woodland along the creek bordering the property. The old farmhouse has undergone extensive remodeling, redecorating, and painting, and now houses the Life Renewal Center. Picnic and recreation areas have been established. In a wooded ravine an amphitheatre accommodating two hundred persons has been built. It is used for festivals, plays, visiting speakers, outdoor worship, and sings.

The first major section which was developed was the retreat area. In one corner of the farm, on the crest of a slope overlooking rolling field and woodland, stands the Lodge for retreats. It has been named the Lodge of the Carpenter. The lodge includes a kitchen, a dining room that seats twenty, and a large worship room with a fireplace. One wall is of glass looking into an untouched wood. Many retreats by the Church of the Savior and other churches have been held here. More recently a building with eighteen single bedrooms and two conference rooms was completed. Nearly every group at the church has retreats once or twice a year and many individuals slip away to spend a quiet day at the lodge.

Dayspring also features a camping area with rustic bath house with showers, a large pavilion for outdoor

dining and meeting place with kitchen adjoining. Ecumenical work camps for college age youth, family camps, teenage camps, and camps for underprivileged children have been held. In these the campers have lived together under the common discipline of work, study, play, and worship, always exploring the meaning of life under God and seeking new ways of expressing the Word.

At some future date several families will probably participate in the upkeep and development of Dayspring. They would form a resident farm community, sharing a common life and helping to tap more of the potential uses to which the farm can be put. Maintaining the peaceful atmosphere of ordered living under the Word, they would be making a much needed witness.

The Potter's House Workshop. The Potter's House Workshop began operating in late 1961, with one class held on the third floor of the church headquarters. Its purpose was to aid artists, apprentices and students to move deeper into the life of the Christian community through the medium of art. One of the members of the church who is an artist and a teacher, resigned her job as an art teacher in the public high school to take charge of the Workshop.

Later a building was found, work parties renovated it and regular classes were begun. Six classes were

offered the first semester: ceramics, design exploration, metalcraft, printing fabrics, sculpture, and weaving. Tuition was \$40 per class for a twelve-week semester.

The workshop offers classes at several levels. Through its elementary classes the workshop hopes to be in touch with those who have not had a previous creative experience and want to explore the various arts and crafts. Classes are also intended for those who may never find art a primary call. They will however, learn the feel of materials, the joy of shaping them, and appreciation of color, form, and design. Specialized classes for the very young and for the very old are also being planned, perhaps the emotionally disturbed will be included through cooperation with the Renewal Center.

At one time the world of art was closely associated with the Christian community. It is the thought of this mission group that the Christian faith need not be colorless and prosaic when it can be the most exciting of all adventures. Thus this outpost of the church attempts to meet the artist at his work and share in the joy of creation.

The Life Renewal Center. The Life Renewal Center is a dream which the congregation has had of a place of serenity and renewal where the healing ministry, so well known in the early church, may be restored. Such power of

healing is available in a forgiven community. The best counseling and medical help available will be teamed with the prayers of the faithful.

Dayspring, the church's farm, offers an ideal setting for such a center, for here the community of faith often gathers.

This mission group had early decided that the Director of the Life Renewal Center should be a pastoral psychologist with clinical experience and an understanding of the concept of commitment which the church has. After some thought and prayer, Dr. Joseph W. Knowles of the Institute of Religion in Houston, Texas, was invited to visit the church and explore the idea with the group. The result was that in January, 1963, Dr. Knowles joined the staff of the Church of the Savior, and the Renewal Center Mission began a new phase of its work.

In the meantime the mission group of twenty-five completed a study course to help them better understand this area of need. The study included the following subjects: (1) some basic assumptions about deeply troubled people; (2) barriers to communion and wholeness; (3) resources for communion and wholeness; and (4) experimenting with group methods.

On Monday nights the group holds a prayer healing service. In order to participate a person must be

sponsored by two members of the mission group. This assures that the one being prayed for has two persons who will be a friend to him. It is false to assume that prayer can be offered and the matter left to God. Prayer assumes a willingness to become involved in a relationship.

O'Connor sums up the intent of the group in these words:

We will create in the midst of the Christian community a home for those who are emotionally disturbed, those who are alcoholics, those who need a half-way house as they leave mental institutions, or those who need a time of quiet and relief from responsibilities in order to halt a move toward a mental institution and perhaps save long months and even years of hospital treatment. Not only will we provide the best counseling and medical help available but the prayers of the faithful, so that perchance God may heal minds and emotions directly.<sup>15</sup>

The Rockville House Congregation. This mission group aims to be the church in the locality where several church members live, drawing in the neighbors and attempting to carry out in a house group the week-day activities which normally take place in the church building. On Sundays the Rockville group worships with the rest of the church's congregation.

The ministry of the Rockville Congregation is to the unchurched in suburbia. At the heart of it is a small committed core which makes this structure of the church

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 135.

possible. On Thursday evenings they conduct a School of Christian Living in the informal atmosphere of a recreation room. Attendance each semester varies from ten to thirty. Courses are offered to meet the pagan or worldly person where he is. This has led to stimulating discussions.

The church-in-the-house is a first century church structure which is finding new meaning in the twentieth century. However, there is no house congregation if there are not persons infused by the Holy Spirit. Structures, techniques, and challenging programs are not enough. They may win people to organizations, but not to Christ. For this we need men and women abandoned to God. The Rockville House Congregation is an attempt by the core group to live this kind of witness in their community.

The Library Group. The Library Group has the responsibility of keeping the church library well stocked. It also promotes the reading of significant books, both old and new. When one considers the School of Christian Living, the teacher's classes, and the studies of the mission groups, this becomes an important ministry. Experimentation will yet show other ways this group can serve and witness.

The Association. The Association is a group of business and professional men who regard it as their function to promote and develop Christian enterprises.

Its purposes have been defined as these:

(1) Assessment of ideas. To assess carefully the merits of ideas originating from within the Association or received from outside which might develop into Christian enterprises.

(2) Establish new businesses. To assist in all possible ways the establishment of new, Christian, privately or corporately owned enterprises, which will become members or associate members of the Association.

(3) Spiritual support. To provide a fellowship of prayer and study for representatives of member businesses in order that the Holy Spirit might move in them and there be a spirit of oneness in a common venture.

(4) Business support. To meet together in business sessions for creative thinking and meditation, realizing that the group exists for a kingdom service and that ideas on management, sales programs, etc., will emerge as we wait, listen, pray, and meditate together.<sup>16</sup>

Having stated its purpose, the group began to think of ways to implement their ideas. Their thoughts turned to the depressed areas of Washington and Christian businesses. This is expressed in the following statement:

We have decided that the ministry of our Christian businesses will be to an underprivileged area and that we will think not only in terms of businesses which express the mission of the church, but businesses which are related to the needs of the poor.<sup>17</sup>

A small factory has been contemplated. One possibility would be a ceramic factory with the Workshop producing the designs and molds. If the factory was open at

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 169-170.      <sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 173.



night, volunteers might come on much the same basis as at Potter's House. The factory would give any profits to the Association to be used to bring into existence other Christian businesses or improved housing or service projects.

Another project is a Professional Art Rental Service with a threefold purpose:

(1) To incorporate into the existing decor of an office or reception room a creative atmosphere by bringing to the attention of clients and visitors the works of leading Washington artists.

(2) To make the hours that clients spend waiting for appointments or conferences more pleasing.

(3) To provide gallery space for Washington's many competent artists, thereby providing a link between the artist and his community.<sup>18</sup>

Another enterprise was the establishment of Potter's Press, an offset printing press. Stock was issued in the amount of six thousand dollars to launch the project. Nonvoting stock B was offered to any interested friend, and voting stock A was made available only to church members. The press prints the literature which every mission needs. In addition it does commercial orders, prints literature, and cards and artistic creations of the Workshop.

Other businesses are being planned by this mission

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 174.

group.

## VI. SUMMARY

It was somewhat prophetic that those who installed the brass plaque on the door of the mansion had it read: Headquarters of the Church of the Savior. The church exists in the Workshop, on a farm, in a coffee house, and in many other forms. They learned that people do not exist to serve structures, but that structures must exist to serve people. In these experimental, flexible structures the church has been able to begin fulfilling its mission to the world. Too often the churches today keep those things which should have been allowed to die natural or unnatural deaths because they have hindered the church in its mission.

New structures will not in themselves result in a new sense of mission. Commitment and discipline are prerequisites. O'Connor explains it this way:

We are not called primarily to create new structures for the church in this age; we are not called primarily to a program of service, or to dreams or have visions. We are called first of all to belong to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and to keep our lives warmed at the hearth of His life. It is there the fire will be lit which will create new structures and programs of service that will draw others into the circle to dream dreams and have visions.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

So total commitment, discipline, and service through flexible changing structures have allowed the Church of the Savior to be on mission in a unique way.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE MISSIONARY CONGREGATION

The term "Missionary Congregation" is used in this chapter as descriptive of the concept of congregation in the East Harlem Protestant Parish. This Parish is perhaps the classic example of experimentation in this country to find new structures in the church which will encourage a congregation to exist in mission. This mission is to witness in the world to the truth of what God has done in Christ.

#### I. THE EAST HARLEM PROTESTANT PARISH

East Harlem is one of the world's most densely populated areas in the United States. Extending from 96th Street to 125th Street, and bound on the west by Central Park, and on the east by the East River, it is a jumble of more than two hundred thousand people jammed together in little over one square mile. On one block over four thousand people are packed into twenty-seven tenements. Often several families live in one apartment. Some one has estimated that if all the inhabitants of the United States lived in the same density as these, the entire population could be housed in one-half the area of New York City.

Don Benedict and Bill Webber were both students at

Union Theological Seminary in the fall of 1947. They were confused by the fact that Seminary students were hearing the call to "go into all the world" while the church had virtually abandoned the lost continent of East Harlem. Sharing their interest and concern was Archie Hargraves, who had lived in East Harlem and was now a Baptist seminary student. Did the church have a message for these people? These three young men felt it did. They began to visit the area to get a more realistic picture of life there.

East Harlem has a long history as an immigrant community. The tenements were built to house the great mass of immigrants coming to this country at the close of the nineteenth century. While many moved out into the main stream of American life, others remained. A minority of Italians still reside in the area. Since the second World War a steady stream of Puerto Ricans have poured into the city, as well as Negroes coming from the south. Webber describes the community in these words:

Here the whole range of social problems, created by modern urban life, is seen in exaggeration: race prejudice, juvenile delinquency, inferior schools, poor housing, breakdown in family life, loss of meaning in work, and all the rest. Here one sees in stark terms the meaning of depersonalization, the fearful trend in our society to make human beings into objects to be manipulated, exploited or organized.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>George W. Webber, God's Colony in Man's World (New York: Abingdon Press, 1960), p. 17.

East Harlem has the highest rate in the city for tuberculosis, venereal disease, infant mortality, rat bites, and malnutrition. The trash and garbage disposal services are inadequate. Many children are unwanted, and rarely go to school. Unmarried mothers must face the problem of supporting themselves and their children. Young and old are involved in crime and use of dope.

The challenge to the church was inescapable, although Protestants had been largely baffled in their efforts to maintain a vital witness there. It was assumed that many were Roman Catholics and that Negroes had their own churches.

One warm Sunday morning in Lent, 1948, two Seminary students stationed themselves at either end of an East Harlem block for an informal test. On the block lived about two thousand people; half were Puerto Ricans who were thought to be Roman Catholic, and half were Negroes who were thought to be traditionally Protestant. From 6:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. the two men kept count of all people who passed. Only twenty-nine people left the block during those seven hours. Only 1.5 per cent could possibly have attended church. The conclusion from this and other informal surveys was that the overwhelming majority of the people in East Harlem had no real relationship with any church.

Three local forms of Christianity existed in the area but all seemed irrelevant. The Pentecostal storefront churches were dismissed as an escape mechanism from the reality of the world. Three Roman Catholic churches were well attended and imposing structures. To the masses, they were apparently irrelevant as symbols of wealth and power and so were treated with suspicion and scorn. Protestants largely represented the church invisible. A single Presbyterian church still remained in the area with its doors locked except for five hours a week. About thirty persons gathered for worship in a church built to seat three hundred.

It was January, 1948, when Benedict and Webber headed for Buck Hill Falls for the meeting of the Division of Home Missions of the National Council of Churches. Armed with enthusiasm and an idea, they were being allowed time to present their idea to the Division. Kenrick describes their idea in these words:

The plan was for a three-man unit to work in East Harlem for an initial period of three years. They would work as a team on a total program, but each would have direct responsibility for a church. The three churches would lease storefront structures, and the rental of each would be under \$100 a month. The ministers would live near the churches and would begin their work by systematic calling, by giving recreational leadership, and by cooperating with existing community agencies such as settlements and welfare offices and courts. As soon as sufficient interest was aroused, the activities would be

followed up with worship services and Sunday Schools and participation in social action and in local politics.<sup>2</sup>

The session ended with American Baptist, Congregationalist, Methodist, and Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. representatives approving \$10,200 to finance an eighteen month trial of the plan. Other denominations that soon joined the project included: Reformed Church in America, General Conference Mennonites, Evangelical and Reformed, and Evangelical United Brethren.

On an August day in 1948, a team arrived in a truck to convert the ground floor of the building on the corner of Third Avenue and East 102nd Street into a storefront church. Neighbors gathered to watch the three ministers in work clothes clean out the stench and refuse of the former butchershop. Soon teenagers were helping tear out the rotting boards and loading them on the truck. By nightfall the storefront began to look like a place of worship, with new floor, a rough cross, and a Communion table. It was the first of the Parish storefront churches where Benedict and Hargraves were based as co-pastors. Two blocks away Webber and several students explored new territory in a persistent round of calling on people in

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<sup>2</sup>Bruce Kenrick, Come Out of the Wilderness (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), p. 30.



their homes.

The boundaries of the Parish were to be the lower eastern quadrant of East Harlem, roughly from 96th to 112th Streets, between Lexington Avenue and the East River. Here, over twenty five thousand people lived.

The work of the Parish was to be based on three assumptions.<sup>3</sup> The first was the idea of the storefront church. The communication of the gospel was to be presented on the level of the people, in a framework which would be natural and direct. The store seemed to be the natural social gathering from the crowded tenements.

The second assumption was the need for a group ministry. This would emphasize a sense of comradeship and mutual support in the face of discouragement and frustration. It meant a common set of disciplines and a common budget for the Parish.

The third basic assumption had to do with social action. The Parish would stand for the relevance of the gospel to human need. It meant battling against evil and fighting for justice.

The three men found their early impressions of East Harlem confirmed over and over. As they met obstacles continually they repeated their purpose every Sunday:

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<sup>3</sup>Webber, op. cit., pp. 19-21.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
Because he hath anointed me  
To preach the Gospel to the poor.  
He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted,  
To preach deliverance to the captives,  
And recovering of sight to the blind,  
To set at liberty those that are oppressed,  
To proclaim a year when men may find acceptance  
with the Lord.<sup>4</sup>

Together the men determined four disciplines to which they would commit themselves. The first was a devotional discipline. Each day they would use common Bible readings. Once a week the group would meet in sharing, concluding with Holy Communion. Every six months they would spend three days away in conference and spiritual renewal. The economic discipline meant that each would be paid not according to qualifications but according to need, that is, according to the size of their families. In addition, any money earned by speaking engagements or by writing was to be placed into a common fund to meet special needs in the Parish. A third discipline was vocational. This involved their common calling to proclaim the gospel in East Harlem. It meant a monthly submission of their work, their plans, and their problems to the group. It meant undertaking no change in vocation without consulting the others. Finally, there was a

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<sup>4</sup>Kenrick, op. cit., p. 32.

political discipline. The group was to hammer out a position on all political and legislative issues affecting East Harlem and work for that position. If, in conscience, one could not agree, he was to hold his peace.

Kenrick describes what happened the first day they announced worship services:

The first worship service was preceded by a Sunday School for children. Sixty boys and girls jammed themselves into the tiny twenty-by-twenty foot room and they wanted to stay on for the adult service. But it had already been decided that while the church was to be a family church, its main concern would be with adults, especially with men: and in any case the place would seat no more than 35 grown people, so the children had to leave in order to make room for their elders.

All was ready for the service at eleven o'clock. The ministers waited for fifteen minutes . . . for twenty minutes . . . for a good half hour. Finally the congregation came--a vast Puerto Rican woman with a great infectious laugh and with what, at first sight, looked like a bundle of rags, but which, as she reverently unwrapped them, flicking off cockroaches from the folds, turned out to be a beautiful wooden crucifix. It was a gift for the church.

So this first Protestant worship service began with the hammering of a four-inch nail into the chapel wall and the hanging of the symbol of what "mission" had meant to Christ.

"Let us worship God," said Don Benedict. And the ministers, with their benefactor, bowed their heads in prayer.<sup>5</sup>

Such a beginning must have been discouraging. But gradually, through contacts, calling, and social action,

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

people began to find their way to the little storefront church. In January 1949, a second storefront church was opened on 100th Street, with Bill Webber as its pastor. Soon the Parish of two churches was deeply involved in the district's spiritual plight and social chaos.

Webber describes the scope of the Parish program now when he says:

The Parish employs the following facilities: three store front churches, begun in the early days of our ministry; a Presbyterian church, formerly a mission to the Italian community; two rented club rooms, used for work with two street clubs; two apartments on One Hundredth Street to serve as a base for a fine medical clinic; a store front headquarters for work with drug addicts; a large office in a former furniture store on Second Avenue, where there is also a Federal Credit Union, legal aid clinic, and library; and a retreat center, fifty miles from the city, used extensively for week-end retreats and in the summer for family camping.<sup>6</sup>

The Parish presently embraces 450 communicant members based on the three storefronts and the one (Presbyterian) church building.

## II. THE THEOLOGICAL BASIS

In his book, The Congregation In Mission, George Webber devotes one chapter<sup>7</sup> to the theological basis of

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<sup>6</sup>Webber, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>7</sup>George W. Webber, The Congregation In Mission (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), pp. 48-73.

the work of the East Harlem Protestant Parish. The sub-headings in that chapter become the chapter headings for the rest of the book. To understand the work of the Parish, it is necessary that one have some idea of the theological presuppositions on which it is based.

God's covenant with his people. From beginning to end, in the Bible, God is engaged in ordering the destinies of men and nations. Webber explains this when he says:

With good reason the Old and New Testaments are called "covenants," for they are the story of God's dealing with his peculiar people. They are, in a sense, the constitution of the new kingdom, setting forth the basis of relationship between ruler, Christ, and the ruled, the people of the church. Here the Christian finds the story of God at work to make and keep men truly human.<sup>8</sup>

There must be an effort to take seriously the meaning of the Old and New Testaments as a basis for understanding God's dealings with His world and the meaning of human existence.

Jesus Christ is Lord. In Jesus Christ, God established a new kingdom, with Christ as ruler. He is ruler or Lord of both the church and the world. This affirmation implies a great deal about the relation of the church and the world. The separation of sacred and secular is seen as false. Christians are not called out of

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

the world but to witness to the lordship of Christ in the world. In addition to this, it must also be affirmed that there is an eschatological hope in the lordship of Christ.

The church exists in two dimensions: in its gathered and in its dispersed life. This is related to the understanding that Christ is at work in the world. Thus Christians are the church when they are gathered to worship and study, or when they are involved in their individual relationships in the world.

The new humanity. When the Christian talks about being truly human he means being related to Christ in obedience. Webber says it this way:

As the Bible is the source of knowledge about the covenant between God and his people, and as Christ is the Lord of the new community, it follows that Christians are the subjects of Christ, called to find their life in him.<sup>9</sup>

The center of faith is commitment to Christ for all Christians. Webber goes on to say:

To be truly human involves a conscious and life-converting relationship to Jesus Christ as personal Lord, membership in the family of Christ's people in the context of which one discovers the full meaning of personhood and is sustained in the new loyalty to Christ, and a new vocation on a full-time basis--that is, a life of witness to Christ all the time and everywhere.<sup>10</sup>

A new center of loyalty replaces human loyalties

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

and idolatries when one is committed to Christ. Fellow members of the body of Christ constitute a new family and a new kind of community. In such a community the new humanity of the Christian is discovered, sustained and nurtured. This leads to the new vocation to devote all of one's time and energy for his Lord.

The ordering of God's people. There is a ministry of the whole church which is being recaptured. This is the priesthood of all believers. It has led to a renewed emphasis on the role of the laity. Living and involved in the world, the laity perform Christ's ministry of witness and service. This implies a functional difference between the clergy and the laity. The ministry of the laity is in the world, while that of the clergy is largely in the gathered congregation. It is the calling of the clergy to prepare and equip the members for their ministries in the church and in the world.

The church exists for mission. A common phrase is "the church is mission." This affirmation helps lift the church out of organizational preoccupation and provides a basis for overcoming the present dichotomy between the church and the world. Webber suggests: "The mission of the church is to make and keep men truly human."<sup>11</sup> In

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

part, this involves discerning the activity of God. This affirms that God is active in the world and the Christian is called to discern the Word of God in the world. Thus involvement in the life of society is not so much a matter of obedience as a condition of being in communion with God.

When in dispersion, church must point to the presence and power of God. Often this may mean keeping quiet until the world asks the questions. The Christian must be sensitive to the other person, but not an intruder.

Equally as important as the theological basis is going one step further and becoming involved in the continuing search for new forms of the life and mission of the congregation.

### III. THE GATHERED LIFE OF THE CHURCH

In the Parish the life of the Christian is understood to exist in two areas; in the gathered life of the church, where Christians meet for their life together of prayer, study, worship and fellowship, and in the dispersed life of the church, scattered in the world as servants of Jesus Christ and witnesses to his kingdom. In the gathered life, the purpose is to become a family, to discover the unity which Christ grants to his people. This takes two forms in the Parish.



The Bible study groups. Over a period of several years the Parish has developed a pattern of Bible study that has become one of the two foci of the gathered life. A long-term, systematic approach to the scriptures was planned. The basic tool devised for Bible study was the Parish Lectionary, a little booklet published quarterly, following the church year. A passage is selected for study each week, often working in consecutive order through a particular book in the Bible. An issue of the News Letter explains the weekly Bible study:

In the Parish we have discovered the need for each of us to meet at least once a week in a small group with our brothers in Christ. Only in this way do we come to know each other in such a way that we are able to bear one another's burdens. The concern of such groups centers in the problems of living in obedience to Jesus Christ in the daily round of life. The study of the Bible, using the Lectionary passage for the week, is the method of getting at these problems.<sup>12</sup>

Usually on Wednesday evening all members of the Parish are urged to attend Bible study groups meeting in various apartments throughout the community. In these sessions, the usual method is to read the passage aloud and let the Scripture raise its own questions in the mind of the group. The purpose of the group is not to stimulate or create fellowship but to prepare the group for the

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<sup>12</sup>"The Bible in the Parish," East Harlem Protestant Parish, News Letter (Spring 1960), pp. 1-2.

mission of the church. This must be a normative part of the life of the church not a sidelight or an option.

The study on Wednesday night prepares for the Sunday morning preaching. The Sunday scripture lesson and the sermon are based on the text studied during the previous week. Also on Monday morning, the Parish staff meets for an hour and a half of intensive Bible study on the passage for the week. They make full use of commentaries and other professional tools in a session of hard work, seeking to discover the truth. This enables them to serve as resource persons for the various Wednesday night meetings. In all of these ways the meaning of the Bible and its relevance to life is being sought.

Corporate Worship. Worship is the substance of the Christian life. In meeting for corporate worship, Christians acknowledge the power and reality of God who is their creator, redeemer, and the source of their hope. Webber phrases it in these words:

Worship is the very life of the Christian, for here he acknowledges that God is God and that through Jesus Christ he has been redeemed. In worship he offers his life in grateful thanksgiving, praying that all he does, being ordered by God, may be righteous in his sight.<sup>13</sup>

After some experimentation, the East Harlem

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<sup>13</sup>Webber, God's Colony . . ., op. cit., p. 60.

Protestant Parish has come up with a fairly traditional Reformation order of worship. It involves considerable congregational participation. This is the second focus of the gathered life. Four acts are in the drama.<sup>14</sup>

When the people gather in the sanctuary, they give thanks in hymns and words of praise for their safe return and for the continual care and protection of God. Confession is then said by all the people. Following the Kyrie and prayer for pardon, the whole congregation joins in the 23rd Psalm or other words of assurance.

Then the minister comes down from the chancel, stands among the people and asks them what is happening to them in God's world. Someone may tell of an important meeting. The names of the sick and those in trouble are reported. Someone may ask for prayer or share an experience of joy. Then the minister returns to the table, kneeling, prays for the specific issues which these people are confronting in their life as Christians in the world. This part of the drama is referred to as reporting.

The second major movement of the service involves the scriptures and the sermon. This is when the congregation listens again to God's word in order to receive His

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<sup>14</sup>"Welcome in the Name of Christ" (New York: The East Harlem Protestant Parish), pp. 7, 10.

direction for their lives. One discovery of the Parish was that the reading of the Scripture and the sermon belong together. Webber describes it saying:

The Bible is open during the early part of the liturgy, but following the initial section of the service, the minister picks up the Bible and carries it to the pulpit. He then reads the scripture, including both an Old and New Testament passage. With the Bible still open on the pulpit, he preaches a sermon based upon the scripture read. Wherever possible the preaching follows a pattern through a number of weeks, usually being related to the Bible study in which the congregation is currently engaged.<sup>15</sup>

The climax of Christian worship is Holy Communion. Communion is now celebrated about twice a month in the worship life of the full congregation. However, every service emphasizes its character as antecommunion. On Sundays without communion, the offertory is a reminder of this fact. In addition, there is a service of Holy Communion each Sunday morning at 8:30 a.m. in one of the Parish churches. This is primarily for the staff but is open to all.

This section of worship begins with an act of fellowship, shaking one another's hands as an appropriate hymn is sung. Then the elements, which were placed on a table near the door before the service, are brought forward with the offering of money. One of the laymen gives

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<sup>15</sup>Webber, God's Colony . . ., op. cit., p. 61.

the offertory prayer on behalf of the congregation. To receive the elements the congregation gathers in a large circle around the table, passing the loaf from hand to hand. Here as they reenact the drama of salvation, they are given the food of life that they might enter again into God's work.

The fourth act in the drama of worship is the return. At the conclusion of the service, the congregation repeats the words which Jesus read in the synagogue. These are now called the Parish Purpose (Luke 4:18). In this way the congregation is reminded that it gathered together to worship, lifting up its life in the world to God, then fed by word and sacrament, and returning to the world as the locus of obedience. This passage reminds the congregation that in the world its only authority is that of the servant, and that this is the task to which God calls them.

#### IV. THE DISPERSED LIFE OF THE CHURCH

In East Harlem, or anywhere else, the church dares not exist as a ghetto where men go to practice religious exercises. It exists as an instrument of God's purpose in redeeming men and restoring them in Christ to their true humanity. Church work does not merely mean being a church officer but serving Christ in the world. A condition of membership in the East Harlem Protestant Parish is active

participation in one community organization working for justice or brotherhood.

One corporate expression of service to the world is the Narcotics Program of the Parish. The high incidence of addiction coupled with an appalling lack of concern caused the Parish to act. In 1951 a play called "Dope" was presented to the community on makeshift platforms on five different vacant lots. The primary purpose was to dramatize the evil of addiction to a good many thousand people. Since that time a steady stream of addicts and their families have turned to the Parish for help. Institutional facilities are extremely scarce. Legislation is slow. Little can be done but the church cannot ignore the problem. The scope of the problem is indicated when:

During the twelve months of 1957, 511 new addicts came into the little narcotics headquarters in a store front on 103rd Street.<sup>16</sup>

A part of service and witness in the world is just "being there." It is a hard price to pay to get involved in the struggles of the world. Webber suggests that it is essential when he says:

What I am here calling the service of men or social action is a vital aspect of the mission of the church, for it is in this way that we demonstrate both the love of Jesus Christ for the world and the willingness of Christians to fight against the principalities and powers of evil in his name.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 80-81.

The Parish has always felt that problems in the district could most effectively be dealt with through political channels. To be a Christian citizen in a democratic society makes participation in politics necessary. For this reason members of the Parish have been involved in a wide variety of such activities having to do with housing, sanitation, unemployment, delinquency, minimum wages, rent control, and relief. Political neutrality has been impossible. To be politically inactive would mean unconcern for those whose urgent needs demand some political changes. Thus members of the Parish find themselves, of necessity, involved in the political structures of the district.

#### V. THE HABITS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

The Christian community exists to worship and to witness. Thus the whole life of the East Harlem Protestant Parish has revolved around these two foci. Certain disciplines or habits seem essential to a style of life. At first the Parish defined certain habits as essential for the clergy but different from those expected of the layman. Gradually they came to realize that all Christians must be under the same disciplines. Webber lists these<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 139-142.

as seven in number:

(1) The ordered day. This implies beginning the day with thankfulness and meditation to plan how to use the day. The daily lectionary is read and time taken for Bible study. An ordered day also means intercession for the lives of those touched that day, concluding the day with committing oneself to God for the night.

(2) Weekly attendance at Holy Communion and faithful participation in the worship life of a congregation.

(3) To participate weekly in an "enabling group" with fellow Christians. Emphasis at present in these groups is on Bible study as described earlier.

(4) Each pledges himself once a month to discuss his Christian faith and the concrete fulfillment of his calling within our life in Christ with one brother whom he selects. There is a certain inescapable honesty necessary in such an individual relationship, which releases one to spiritual growth.

(5) To give regularly a definite share of one's income to God's church.

(6) To participate in at least one community organization working for justice or brotherhood. This is the symbol of responsibility to witness to the love of God in concrete ways.

(7) To exercise faithfully the particular ministry



which has been given in the fellowship of the church.

Such patterns of discipline are necessary if the integrity of the church is to be maintained.

Webber summarizes the rhythm of the church gathering and scattering.

Our life, in a very real sense, is one of rhythm from the battle of life in the world back into the sanctuary of the church, where vision may be renewed by the preaching of the Word, our bodies fed by the sacrament and our courage renewed in the community of our fellow soldiers. What we do within the life of the church are not pious exercises but rather preparations directed toward our mission in the world. It is our sins in the world which we confess to God when we gather in the church. It is the concerns of our life in the world for which we intercede. It is the ordinary bread of daily life which we break in the sanctuary as a reminder that whenever we break bread, we should give thanks to him who sustains us in all of life.<sup>19</sup>

The church exists for its mission in the world. This is obviously true in East Harlem, it ought to be as necessarily true of the church in any situation.

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE URBAN CENTERS

Christians are engaging in new shapes of missionary presence by penetrating the social structures now isolated from the traditional congregation. In metropolitan areas the church is endeavoring to reach man at the points of his involvement in the world through industrial missions and coffee houses; through participation and identification with social revolutions and in numerous other ways. This multiplicity of forms which the church must take should not be considered additional or secondary forms of church life, but as its authentic expressions. These paraparochial forms of the church will be illustrated in this chapter by two examples: the Detroit Industrial Mission, and The Glide Urban Center, San Francisco.

#### I. DETROIT INDUSTRIAL MISSION

The Detroit Industrial Mission is the church attempting to witness in a specialized ministry through the structures and institutions which characterize an industrial metropolitan area. The staff of five clergymen representing several denominations works under the direction of a Board of Directors. This Board is composed of representatives of four major denominations, representatives of the management of several industries,

representatives of several labor unions, as well as several members at large.

A strategy for action. The Detroit Industrial Mission is based on the need of the church to reach into the structures and institutions of an urbanized-industrialized segment of metropolis. Industrialization has been a dominant force shaping urban culture. It has transformed the life of people including farmers, factory workers, clerks, technicians, and managers. There is an interrelation between the process of industrialization and the process of urbanization. Industrialization has played a major role in creating the city. Economic opportunity offered by industry has resulted in a concentration of population creating new markets, attracting new manufacturing, and a host of service industries. White and Batchelder have suggested the role of the church in this statement:

In the pluralism of structures and institutions that shape the metropolis, mutually influencing one another and creating the ethos within which human life grows, the economic structures of business, industry and labor are certainly among the most important. If the church really means to take metropolis seriously and to develop her mission to the whole of urban life, she must discover effective means of engagement with these economic structures and the men who operate within them.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hugh C. White, Jr. and Robert C. Batchelder, "Christian Faith and Industrial Society" (Detroit: Detroit Industrial Mission, Occasional Paper No. 7), p. 5.

An effective strategy of mission in an urbanized-industrialized society requires the church to work through specialized ministries in the dominant structures of the metropolis.

A local congregation, while it needs to consider ways to fulfill its ministry in the world, is somewhat confined by nature and resources to reach into the vast and complex nature of the metropolitan area. There are limitations which make it an inappropriate instrument for dealing with large and powerful corporate structures. Since its building is often located in a residential neighborhood it tends to focus its concern on issues relating to families, women and children. The parish organization and traditional expectations on the part of the congregation consume the time and energy of the clergy. This makes it difficult to become intimately familiar with the specialized issues characterizing even one corporation.

It can begin to be sensitive to the workings and problems of the city where many of its members exercise their daily vocational responsibility.

A local congregation that thinks only in terms of individuals and ignores the reality and power of structures will be severely hampered in its efforts to carry out a ministry of service.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

However, an effective ministry of the laity must be based on knowledge of industrialized institutions. Therefore a primary task of the local congregation is to inspire and train its members to carry out the ministry of Christ in their places of daily responsibility. These are within the economic structures of business, industry, and labor. In this way it will begin to face outward toward the world instead of inward toward itself, with a growing concern for the whole metropolis. The specialized ministry can begin to help it at this point because of intimate acquaintance with metropolitan structures.

In the meantime, specialized ministry is the means by which the church can most effectively deal with issues in the public realm transcending the boundaries of the residential neighborhood where the congregation naturally tends to focus its efforts. The major issues of the city will not be solved by men in their capacity as private citizens. Men will deal with these issues through their institutional roles as members and officials of corporations, labor unions, political organizations, universities, police departments, and city governments.

If the church is serious in its efforts to influence for good the fabric of the metropolitan areas, it must develop appropriate instruments of mission that can deal with these institutions and structures on their own ground, in their own language, and

with intimate knowledge of how things look from their prospective.<sup>3</sup>

This is the role of the specialized ministry--to be the instrument of mission at these points. This specialized ministry thus becomes a necessary supplement of the church in its traditional form.

In this form the church will reach out to engage men in the context of the structures and institutions that dominate the urban scene. In Detroit, this has taken the form of a ministry primarily to industry.

A staff member working with management. To understand the function of management is essential to such a specialized ministry. During the summer of 1964 Robert Batchelder attempted to learn all he could about management ethics. This was to determine the standards by which large corporation managers guide their decisions and action. He had this to say about the men:

With rare exceptions, they are men seeking to get the job done both efficiently and humanely; they are convinced that honesty is the best policy; they are concerned for the public responsibility of their corporation; and they approach their work with a high sense of personal integrity.<sup>4</sup>

While high ethical standards are an accepted ideal

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>4</sup>Robert C. Batchelder in Newsletter (Detroit: Detroit Industrial Mission), VII:1 (Fall 1964).

by management, often there is a conflicting practice or lack of fulfillment in the eyes of the laborer. Batchelder expresses this in these words:

Yet on the other hand, the more I visit in the plants and in the union halls, the more impressed I become of the well-nigh universal conviction on the part of production workers that managers are a bunch of rascals whose sole interest is in squeezing a few more dollars of profit out of the worker. And I must admit that the specific complaints that workers voice are the very things I would be complaining loudly about if I were working on the production line.<sup>5</sup>

The root of the problem seems to be in a double standard. This arises from the fact that in pursuing a good goal the management may tend to apply their standard in a certain way among their peers, and yet in an entirely different way to subordinates. The objective of efficiency illustrates the point. Most workers agree with management that there ought to be maximum output from a given investment of capital and human energy. A double standard sneaking in when managers are tempted to think that they are concerned for efficiency, while hourly-rated workers are not. The implied attitude is that workers are not interested in higher efficiency and are not capable of thinking of ways to increase efficiency. Yet it was found that one of the most frequent subjects of conversation among production workers was the inefficiency of

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

management. Many workers feel they have excellent ideas for higher production but that management wouldn't listen to them. It would rather spend thousands of dollars to hire an efficiency consultant. As Batchelder says:

But the dominant management attitude is to think of hourly-rated workers as the object of ideas about greater efficiency, rather than the source of such ideas.<sup>6</sup>

A management that is serious about increasing productivity will have to devise ways of tapping the tremendous reservoir of ideas about greater efficiency on the part of employees.

Another value high on the list of management is that of initiative. The ability of a man to think for himself, to direct his own activities, to take the initiative, is highly valued. Conversely, nothing will block the progress of a manager as to write the words "lacks initiative" on his performance evaluation form.

While initiative is admired and encouraged in managers, it is discouraged in production and clerical workers. Rather they are paid to do what they are told. Such an attitude does not dull the ingenuity and imagination of workers. Their resourcefulness is merely redirected to discover ways to avoid work, to embarrass the

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid.



foreman or to do a minimal job while appearing to meet the outward standard.

The use of the double standard is a major problem on the industrial scene. Its effects are costly in terms of human relations as well as in dollars and cents. Strikes result. But more important than the strike is the waste of human skill and energy. Batchelder concludes his report saying:

The greatest challenge to manager's ingenuity is tapping the full resourcefulness of their own people. Much will be gained--for productivity and for the people of industry--when managers learn to apply their own best principles in a way that wipes out the double standard.<sup>7</sup>

Thus the specialized ministry tries to gain intimate knowledge of how things look from the perspective of management and labor. Only then can he enter into dialogue on their own ground, in their language.

A staff member working with labor. During 1963-64 Jesse Christman of the Detroit Industrial Mission was assigned to work with United Automobile Workers Union 22. This union represents the Cadillac Motor Car workers. It is composed of approximately eight thousand members, two full-time staff members, three office workers and a well-equipped union hall across the street from the plant. The

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

most important committee is the Bargaining Committee. It is composed of eight men who represent workers in bargaining over grievances with the management of the Cadillac Division of General Motors.

During the year, Mr. Christman participated in numerous ways in the activities of the union. Among them were: (1) attending meetings in the union hall, (2) attending the regular monthly membership meetings of the union, (3) visiting the Bargaining Committee in its weekly meetings as it prepared to bargain with management, (4) attending special meetings where problems had arisen, (5) entering into conversations with union members and leaders, and (6) visiting men at their work locations.

Christman feels any contribution he has been able to make to the life of the union lies in several areas. First, are the many occasions for talking to members of the union, questioning, criticising, and affirming them. He states it this way:

The value of these conversations depends largely on my ability to deal directly and immediately with matters of real concern to these men.<sup>8</sup>

A second contribution has been in weekly meetings with the Bargaining Committee. Christman was given the opportunity to carry on a more formal discussion with them

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

on predetermined topics. One series of such involved six, one hour sessions, discussing a pamphlet by Paul Jacobs entitled, "Old Before Its Time." This is a rather critical discussion of the role of the union and shortcomings in the way the union is currently functioning. This led the committee to reflect seriously about its responsibility not only to its own members but to the larger community.

On another occasion Christman was allowed to present comments of his own. These were mimeographed, distributed, and discussed for a number of meetings.

Some of the topics for these discussions were:  
(1) The Meaning of Work and the Union's Role, (2) Labor and Politics, and (3) Union Democracy in the U.A.W.<sup>9</sup>

It was not assumed that the discussions accomplished any great revolution in the union's operation. It did enable them to give more thoughtful consideration to their job.

Another contribution has been through meetings with members outside the work location. Men were invited to the home of some Mission staff member for conversation on topics of mutual concern. At times special visitors were invited to talk with the group. Topics of conversation included: race relations in the union movement, profit sharing, and streamlining the grievance procedure. These

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

occasions offered the opportunity for serious reflection and self-criticism regarding such issues.

It has been difficult to determine any specific action that has grown out of conversations and discussions. Yet the Detroit Industrial Mission perceives them as worthwhile in stating:

. . . we believe that when men seriously consider together the work in which they are engaged, new ideas and new possibilities will open up for them which they previously have not considered.<sup>10</sup>

This opens up the opportunity in the future for deepening and broadening the relationship of the Mission with the working man. This ministry of engagement, therefore is essential and worthwhile.

The Detroit Industrial Mission is involved in numerous other activities in an attempt to broaden its ministry and make it more effective. A concerted effort is being made to develop and publish usable curriculum for plant and industrial congregations. It is also moving in the direction of relating to groups within congregations to help them see their role in an industrial society. Visitors from this country and abroad have been a part of a program of studying the industrial and urban work of the church. Overnight conferences have been held with men

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

from management and labor to examine what insight the Christian faith can bring to an industrial society and to evaluate the methods of the Detroit Industrial Mission. In all these ways the staff is attempting to be the church in a complex urban industrial society.

## II. THE GLIDE URBAN CENTER

The Glide Urban Center in San Francisco is an attempt to proclaim the gospel in new patterns in an urban society. The Glide Urban Center is one of the newer expressions of the church, having called its Program Director only three years ago and added additional staff since then. It is committed to exploring the relationship of the gospel to the city and attempting to witness to a largely secular urban society. This is being done to a large extent through the structures already in existence in the city as well as experimenting with several new forms. The 1964 report to the California-Nevada Annual Conference put it this way:

. . . a program . . . oriented largely toward inner city problems of the San Francisco Bay area. Thrusts into areas of need hitherto relatively untouched by the Church are in process of being projected.<sup>11</sup>

The staff sees its work of witness largely through

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<sup>11</sup>The Methodist Church, The Journal of the California-Nevada Conference (1964), p. 164.

"new structures,"<sup>12</sup> according to Durham. This is based on the idea that the church as an institution in the metropolitan urban society has largely been irrelevant to that society. Williams expressed witness in terms of "just being there,"<sup>13</sup> as the life of the city moves on. This is a non-verbal but significant witness by presence, listening and learning from the city. McIlvenna spoke of witness as "offering friendship."<sup>14</sup> The implications of these phrases will be more clearly explained later in the chapter.

The efforts of the Glide Urban Center naturally divides into four major areas, each area directed by a Methodist clergyman. These areas are: Program Director and Division of Training, Division of Church and Community, Division of Communications, and the Young Adult Project.

Division of training. Lewis Durham has been Program Director of the Glide Urban Center since its beginning and also directs its Division of Training.

A significant aspect of training has been the internship program of preparing theological students for a

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<sup>12</sup>Lewis Durham, Convocation Address, School of Theology, Claremont, California, October 14, 1964.

<sup>13</sup>Cecil Williams, Convocation Address, School of Theology, Claremont, California, October 14, 1964.

<sup>14</sup>Ted McIlvenna, Convocation Address, School of Theology, Claremont, California, October 14, 1964.

ministry in the city by offering practical experience there. At present the internship program includes ten persons. One intern is working with the single young adults at Glide Church and investigating ways of developing a program for the downtown business district. Another is assigned to Hospitality House, a retreat center in the city; another to explore a program with apartment house dwellers. One is assigned to International House to work with immigrants. A furniture store on North Beach is the base of operation for another. Three interns work at the Precarious Vision coffee house. One is assigned to the new Halfway House, a residence for young adults recently released from mental institutions. The tenth intern is to seek to develop program for vocational groups. In all these ways the interns will be able to become intimately acquainted with some aspect of the city and be available to enter into dialogue with the people of the city.

Retreats, consultations and conferences have been held to bring together persons involved in the life and structures of the city and representatives of the church to explore together problems of relating the gospel to the world.

The Program Director also serves as a member of committees including the San Francisco Council of Churches and the United Fund. He is serving on the committee

developing a night ministry in San Francisco and a group planning a metropolitan-wide conference to explore what churches in the Bay Area can profitably do together in planning, study, and action.

Division of church and community. This division has a wide variety of contacts and participation in program through the efforts of its director.

One of these is Halfway House, a residential facility for young adults leaving mental hospitals. In the spring of 1964 a sixteen-week training program was set up for thirty persons to learn about this special need. Most of the participants were members of the Park Presidio Methodist Church which was asked to sponsor the facility. In June 1964 a large residence was purchased at 730 Baker Street in San Francisco. The need for such a facility was pointed out in a report of the training program:

At one time psychiatric patients were admitted to hospitals with the expectation of remaining for long periods of time. But now it is often only a matter of a few weeks in a hospital and then release to some form of control environment outside of the hospital.<sup>15</sup>

Seeing the need for such a facility the church felt under the necessity of entering such a service directed program in cooperation with the community. Residents stay

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<sup>15</sup>"Specialized Housing for Single Young Adults" (San Francisco: Glide Foundation), p. i.



at least one month and no more than eighteen months with emphasis that the setting is transitional as a springboard to a more permanent living situation. The report goes on to say:

The period after coming out of the hospital is often crucial to someone's life from the mental health-mental illness standpoint. Being removed from society for any period of time and coming back into the community necessitates a major reorganization of what a person wants to do, where he wants to live, what type of job he wants and can secure. In San Francisco we have a large young adult population who, though not labeled mentally ill, are having tremendous upheaval and turmoil coming into a strange city, trying to find themselves and find a niche for themselves. We envision the halfway house as being able also to offer something to this group of people.<sup>16</sup>

The role of the church and its members in sponsoring such a facility is indicated in this statement:

Sometimes people seem to get well or better because of relationships with other human beings or because they're under the influence or identify with someone. This person is often someone with no professional training--just an interested human being who is willing to extend himself to someone in need.<sup>17</sup>

Here is the essence of ministry, the Christian extending himself to someone in need.

Another important witness has been through involvement in Freedom House. Freedom House is a storefront community center located at 1832 Fillmore Street, San Francisco. This is one of the oldest residential areas of the

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

city largely populated by Negroes. The area designated A-2 is now part of a large program of redevelopment from single family housing to multi-story apartments. The apartments already completed are far beyond the economic reach of present residents. This usually means they have no place to go. Freedom House sees its purpose as:

(1) Oppose the present redevelopment plan because it does not meet the needs of all A-2 residents. (2) Achieve goals through nonviolent action. (3) Speak the truth about A-2. (4) Advise A-2 residents of all vital events and community services. (5) Rehabilitate existing structures and encourage development of resident cooperatives. (6) Enforce city health and safety codes. (7) Find the working definition of low-cost housing. (8) Balance low-cost and moderate-cost housing. (9) Aid the displaced; create tenant security. (10) Promote cooperation between landlords, tenants and city agencies.<sup>18</sup>

A second program at Freedom House has been its tutorial project. Many children and youth were not able to assume grade-level work in school. Tutoring has been offered to help them. Tutors, either college youth or adults, attend an orientation course and then assist in tutoring during one of the two-hour sessions each week. This service has been warmly welcomed by the community as evidenced by participation.

A third major endeavor of this division has been in

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<sup>18</sup>"A-2 Stand" (San Francisco: Glide Foundation, November 14, 1964), p. 1.

a ministry to youth. Studies have been made and consultations held on the church youth community of the inner city and the gang community. Efforts are being made to strengthen the ministry to youth in inner city churches. Through Youth For Service, a rehabilitative agency for helping delinquents find meaning in work and service, an attempt is being made to channel the energy of youth into constructive activities. About 350 boys are involved at present. An unusual program has been the development of "Peace Squads" from gangs. The youth of numerous gangs are being taught non-violent tactics in an endeavor to rechannel their energy from destructive to constructive uses. When some act of violence is committed by a youth, representatives of various gangs demonstrate to show their disapproval of such violence. Demonstrations are held at the scene of the violence, at the hospital if someone has been injured, at the Police Station or wherever visible evidence is needed to show disapproval. These are representative of the ways in which this division is attempting to be the church in the world, engaging itself in the forces of the city.

Division of communications. This division is one of the newest programs of the Glide Urban Center and largely in the formative and exploratory stages of operation. In analyzing communications needs, an involved

study of the informal and formal structure of Protestant Christianity in San Francisco is being made. News releases of the work of the church are much needed. It is likely that a publication of some sort will be developed.

Young adult project. The fourth area of involvement by the Glide Urban Center has been the Young Adult Project, a cooperative venture with the national Methodist Board of Education. An exploration of young adult needs has been a continuing part of the project. An intriguing outcome has been a coffee house called "The Precarious Vision" located at 1040 Bush Street, San Francisco. This has proven a popular center of dialogue with young adults of the city. It functions both as an amicable setting for informal conversation as well as a stage where points of view may be presented through art and drama. A study is now being made of further development into an interdenominational cultural center to be a point of intersection for the artist, the religious community, and the world-at-large. As a forum on the vital issues of the times and as a center of dialogue, this unique form of the church has much to commend itself.

Other aspects of the Young Adult Project have included conferences and consultations with representatives from various denominations, concern for housing, the printing of "A Directory to Community Resources for Young

Adults," and conversations with the homosexual community.

Thus, in many ways, the church is seeking to be with people where they are in the city, to affirm them as human beings, to offer friendship. Durham sees the role of the church in this kind of situation as a change agent, not initiating change in society, not controlling society, but influencing the change already taking place in terms of its direction.<sup>19</sup> In this connection he sees a three-fold purpose for the Glide Urban Center; (1) to renew the church to become relevant to society, (2) to support the change others are attempting, and (3) identifying the mission of the church with neglected areas of need to be served.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Durham, op. cit.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

PART THREE: IMPLICATIONS OF NEW FORMS

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## CHAPTER IX

### WHY NEW FORMS ARE EMERGING?

Three factors stand out above many when one begins to ask why new forms of the church are emerging. These are (1) the changing world, (2) a renewed concern for the mission of the church, and (3) a rediscovery of the apostolate of the laity. An increasing number of books appear each year on these subjects. Therefore only the briefest mention of each can be made here. The new forms of the church described in Chapters II through VIII all give evidence that these are the three major factors contributing to the emergence of new forms.

#### I. THE WORLD

There has been an incredibly rapid expansion of technology, science, and industry unprecedented in the history of mankind. It has its limitations and dangers, but has also provided mankind with an entirely new world of relationships and possibilities. For good or ill, it is the kind of world in which man must live today.

The development of the atomic bomb ushered in a new age based on science and technology. During the past two decades there has emerged a world-wide technical civilization that has revolutionized the lives of all people. This new technological civilization is a threat

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to mankind. The destructive potential is incalculable. But perhaps there is a danger greater than physical destruction relating to man's purpose for living. Closely related to this is his concern for how things work and not why they exist. The unwillingness to deal with questions of purpose has characterized this technological revolution.

The cybernation revolution has been brought about by the combination of the computer and the automated self-regulated machine. Thus a new area of unlimited productive capacity has begun requiring progressively less human labor. This places machines and humans in competition especially when the machines being produced today have, on the average, skills equivalent to a high school diploma.<sup>1</sup> The implications of this are tremendous.

The development of industry, science and technology have been a dominant force in shaping our increasingly urban culture. They have contributed to a migration from farm to city, changed our standard of living and transformed the lives of people. In 1790 only five per cent of our nation was centered in urban areas. Today over three-fourths of the population live in metropolitan areas.

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<sup>1</sup>"The Triple Revolution" (Santa Barbara: The Ad Hoc Committee on the Triple Revolution, 1964), p. 9.



Cities have given rise to metropolitan areas and these in turn have become great sprawls of urbanization now known as megalopolis.

In the metropolitan milieu of modern society the principle of interdependence is at work. Life in the big city is varied but linked together in an extremely complex web. A significant characteristic of this web is concentration on things and not on persons. The total social structure is served by people acting and contributing to society, irrespective of their personality. Stress is not laid on who these people are but what they can do. The city becomes a large, impersonal complex. Such density of population, living and working together has not resulted in meaningful relationships between persons. Rather, loneliness has resulted. One writer puts it this way:

Frequent close physical contact, coupled with great social distance, accentuates the reserve of unattached individuals toward one another and, unless compensated for by other opportunities for response, gives rise to loneliness.<sup>2</sup>

The rise of an industrial, scientific, and technological age on the one hand; an increasingly urbanized culture on the other, have led to a third characteristic of today's world, namely, secularization.

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<sup>2</sup>Robert E. Lee (ed.), Cities and Churches (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 28.

Today we understand secularisation sociologically as a continuing process of social differentiation by which also the problem of social integration is posed in a special way.<sup>3</sup>

Secularization may be understood as sharing in society on an equal basis. In this sense it might be defined as identification. The secularization of the church is then its identification with the world, refusing to contract itself out of the world.

Miller characterizes the adverse effects of this process on the church in these words:

The fading out of the great structure of Christian truth from the imagination of men has become one of the salient features of our time. That magnificent fabric, fashioned in concrete terms, which interpreted the ultimate nature of reality and elucidated the mystery and meaning of history has slowly but surely vanished from the practical concerns of modern man, and all too often from the preaching of the church.<sup>4</sup>

Others have seen this process more hopefully in terms of confronting the church with making the gospel relevant to the life of man today. These will be discussed in the next section of this chapter. But before moving on to that discussion, it is necessary to pose some theological assumptions regarding the changing world.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>"Towards Structures for the Church in the World," Bulletin, Division of Studies, World Council of Churches, IX:2 (1963), 13.

<sup>4</sup>Samuel H. Miller, The Dilemma of Modern Belief (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 20.

<sup>5</sup>"Urban Exploration Seminars for Clergymen" (New York: National Council of Churches, 1964), p. 2.

(1) God is at work in the city.

(2) God is at work both within the structures of the church and outside of them.

(3) The gospel is relevant to the lives of people in an urban culture.

(4) God will use whatever means He chooses to speak to the people of the city, whether the church approves of His choices or not.

(5) God is calling man to be involved in His work in a changing culture.

The surprising growth of new forms of the church since World War II must be viewed against the background of the increasing secularization of the institutions of Western culture, including the religious institutions.

## II. THE CHURCH

A new concern for the nature and mission of the church has contributed to the emergence of new forms. This has been forced by a continuing debate concerning the relevance of the residential, institutional church to the structures and institutions of society. Some have argued that existing, residentially based congregations are obsolete and irrelevant and must be replaced by new forms. Others see new forms in addition to the institutional church. The church arises from history as well as the

gospel. Stammeler insists on acknowledging the institution of the church and sees it as part of the world. He says:

If one is attempting to approach it empirically, then one must proceed from the fact that even the church, in spite of its religious content, is a worldly structure in every respect. The church is basically an organized corporation in which there are laws and regulations, superiors and subordinates, receipts and expenditures, salaries and pensions. Officials are installed and promoted, buildings and real estate managed; millions of dollars are collected and then controlled and dispersed according to strictly figured budgets.<sup>6</sup>

He goes on to say that we "should speak in all honesty of its institutional structure."<sup>7</sup> However, the church is not only but also an institution. It may emerge in other forms and is so emerging.

Today some serious questions are being raised about the need for continuing the organization called the local church. The questions are not from unbelievers or agnostics, they are from dedicated and committed Christians. Some have felt that in our rapidly changing society the traditional congregational life is virtually futile and archaic. In earlier centuries the church was at the center of life and was very much at the heartbeat of

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<sup>6</sup>Eberhard Stammeler, Churchless Protestants, trans. Jack A. Worthington (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), p. 84.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

society. This is not so today. To vast segments, the church, as it existed years ago and continues to this day, often with much the same forms, activities, and programs, is forlornly inadequate. Sin abounds around the church, yet much congregational activity ignores it while continuing the tasks of routine church life. The point here is that we need the local church, but it must be willing to make whatever changes are necessary to meet the present situation, and that other forms may also emerge to serve and witness along with it.

The church is in danger of failing to see that the values it would defend are the values of the class to which its members belong and not the values of its Faith. And this danger is the greater because the Church in its congregational life has been concerned almost solely with the area of the private and leisure life of its members. Congregational activities have had as their aim the propagation of interest in, and the raising of money for, the work of the church, the providing of a safe social life for its youth and the encouragement of a feeling of fellowship among its members, generally on a spiritual or a social level. And the teaching of the church has been in terms of what its members should do in their homes and in their private relationships with other men. It has had little to do with what men did in their work.

There is restraint to criticize since the inherited institutional structure of the church is often seen as the static norm of the church.

Do the present institutional forms of the church represent the obedient expression of the church in the world? Williams sees some lack of this when he says:

. . . the local congregation is now so structured that it is a sacred island in the secular world, pulling individuals out of the world and causing them to act as commuters shuttling back and forth--leaving the world to enter the Church, and leaving the Church to go back to the world, with no real relation between the two parts of their life.<sup>8</sup>

A ministry to individuals and families in their residential associations is no longer a ministry to society. In a mass society individuals still contribute to decisions for the ill or good of that society. However, they make these contributions through labor unions, managerial positions, political organizations, community organizations, and bureaucratic units which organize their lives. The church needs to be as fully present in all these frameworks. It needs to take form in these public spheres just as much as in the private sphere of the family and the residential district. The local church as the only representation of the universal church is no

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<sup>8</sup>Colin W. Williams, Where In The World? (New York: National Council of Churches, 1963), p. 2.

longer possible.

The church must literally be incorporated and incarnated in the great variety of milieu in which people spend their lives. Only then can it fulfill its mission to the world.

God is at work within the events of history. He calls his people to participate in the struggles of life in the name of Christ.

Among every people the Community of the Church must be seen as signifying and testifying to that new creation in Jesus Christ which God has set as the goal of human history.<sup>9</sup>

The church must not lose herself in a monologue which the world can no longer understand. She may have to abandon church vocabulary and learn the language of modern man. It is paradoxical but true: the church exists for those who do not yet belong to her.

The church must reach beyond the private sector of life to the public sector as well.

The parish, effective possibly at another time and in another situation, is no longer able to make any significant contribution to the missionary task of the Church.

This same distrust of the traditional parochial system is responsible for a great deal of the most recent experiments in evangelism within the Protestant communions. . . . these are an attempt to reach people

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<sup>9</sup>"The Missionary Task of the Church," Bulletin, Division of Studies, World Council of Churches, VII:2 (1961), 9.

at a point where there is a genuine community based, not on the place of residence, but on a common ground of interest.<sup>10</sup>

There is much activity in American churches. At the same time crime rates continue to climb, the expedient is often the norm in public decisions, materialistic goals alone seem to govern economic and social aspirations, racial tensions flourish, mental breakdowns and family breakups are common.

Most of us realize that we have an imperative need to re-examine the pattern of our church's life, and find our way towards some more dynamic and relevant form of Christian community. We also realize the supreme urgency of finding some answer to the problem of communicating our gospel to the masses outside the Church. My own profound belief is that these two things are inextricably bound together, inter-related and inseparable.<sup>11</sup>

Evangelical Academies are seeking to train Christians for their life in the non-residential segments of their life such as vocations, government, science or education.

All these developments reflect the attempt to find shapes and styles of Christian living which will manifest the presence of Christ to men in all areas of their life.

There is then a strong case for rejecting the conclusion that the residential congregation is

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<sup>10</sup>Tom Allan, The Face of My Parish (London: SCM Press, 1954), p. 44.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 49.



necessarily the normal form of church life. It seems possible that the deep attachment to this view is holding the Church back from the freedom it needs to be re-formed in such a way that the presence of Christ can inform the secular patterns of everyday life.<sup>12</sup>

The experimentation has proceeded in two directions. First there has been the development of small group life or koinonia groups. These are places where the opportunity is given for the discovery of self-identity in the free and open meeting of persons. Sometimes the base has been around the Word of God in seeking His will through prayer and study. At other times it has been around a shared concern in the world, a neighborhood, a common task, or a particular problem.

Second, there is a reaching out toward a more inclusive strategy of mission. There is a feeling that the church must penetrate the broken fragments of our culture in order that the lost may be found at the scene of their lostness, and there find meaning through the personal approach of Christ through their colleagues.

The koinonia groups represent a real promise of renewal of the church. The danger is that they will fail in their purpose because of a failure of relating to the world and its needs.

The Church of the Savior found some personal renewal

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<sup>12</sup>Williams, op. cit., p. 11.

in groups centered around Bible study, prayer, and mutual care. However, there was a discouraging dissipation of spiritual energy. The groups did not recover their life and growth until they were reformed and became mission groups, taking their shape from a particular need in the world where the members of the group felt a common call to witness and service.

The implication would seem to be that groups of Christians must be drawn into the various structures of the world to reveal the redeeming power and purpose of Christ. The rise of the Evangelical Academies, the Detroit Industrial Mission, the Glide Urban Center, the Iona Community work in Glasgow, The Church of the Savior; all these indicate that if the Christian mission is to be fulfilled in structures of society separated from the local residence communities, then groups must emerge which find their Christian mission in relating the gospel to such areas of life as industrial life, political life, intellectual life, or cultural life. This will be difficult as Williams suggests:

Today we are within a world of rapid social change in which there is an incredible diversification of the areas of responsible decision. The church as an institution, discovering that its inherited forms have left it outside these emerging centres of commitment, is finding it very difficult to free itself sufficiently to be present in these areas of decision

in such a way as to disclose within the life of the fellowship the signs of the New Creation.<sup>13</sup>

"The church exists for mission," says Webber.<sup>14</sup>

The church and its members are called into being in order to enter into the ministry of Christ in and for the world. Or as Arnold Come has put it "the world does not exist for the church, but the church exists for the world."<sup>15</sup>

It is the vocation of the church to transform society without an ecclesiastical domination of the culture. Wilmore has expressed it this way:

The responsibility of the church for power does not mean bidding for sovereignty over the structures and institutions of society. It means penetrating them in such a way as to be able to instruct the world concerning its purpose of serving human need, concerning its original foundation and the end toward which it moves. It means energizing these structures and institutions, within their own provinces and with the spirit appropriate to their own function, that they can act as the true creatures of God they are.<sup>16</sup>

This means the church will not retreat from society or dominate society. Rather, it will mean discovering

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<sup>13</sup>Colin Williams, What In The World? (New York: National Council of Churches, 1964), p. xix.

<sup>14</sup>George W. Webber, The Congregation In Mission (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), p. 66.

<sup>15</sup>Arnold B. Come, Agents of Reconciliation (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), p. 19.

<sup>16</sup>Gayraud S. Wilmore, The Secular Relevance of the Church (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 59.

when, where, and how God is moving. It must recognize Him, listen to Him, to serve Him, and thus to signify Him in every sphere of human life.

### III. THE LAITY

It is generally accepted that the effective propagation of the Christian faith in the world depends ultimately on the witness of the layman. The idea of the apostolate of the laity is being eagerly examined by the church.

If the message which the church proclaims is to be brought to the world, it must be brought where the church meets the world. By and large, this is where the lay members are to be found. This is based on the fact that the church's ministry belongs to the whole church, all the people of God. The church's mission is not the cultivation of a withdrawn community but the active witness of the people of God to the love of God in Jesus Christ amid the structures of the world. This is precisely what the new forms described in earlier chapters are attempting to do. This is what Arnold Come means when he speaks of the laity as agents of reconciliation. He explains the term saying:

We would argue that "agent" is a better translation of diakonos than "minister" or "servant." "Agent" captures that paradoxical ambivalence of simultaneous

dependence and responsibility which is characteristic of the whole Christian life and experience.<sup>17</sup>

This is what Niebuhr means when he refers to "the whole church ministering."<sup>18</sup> He goes on to say that "the church is recognized to be the ministering community whose work is in the world."<sup>19</sup>

The layman is anything but some sort of marginal figure on the outskirts of the church. He is the essential interpreter of the Christian message in the battlefield of the world. Therefore he must be prepared for open confession of his faith and for active service in everyday life.

People living and working in the midst of the stresses of modern society are better fitted than the clergy to understand what is going on in that society. Therefore, they are potentially better able to interpret and proclaim the gospel to the world. Laymen are not to be encouraged to be some kind of imitation or inferior minister but to be Christ's representative in the world outside the church. Lay people need to realize that they are the instrument through which God's redeeming work is

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<sup>17</sup>Come, op. cit., p. 133.

<sup>18</sup>Richard A. Niebuhr, The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), p. 85.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

to be done in the world. Too frequently the truth of the gospel is isolated within the church. The church is a lay movement. It is people living the life of Christ in the world. Buildings, private worship, ministry and theology are essential to Christianity, but only as aids to men's living of the Christian life. When they become the guardians of religion, something is wrong.

Too often it has been assumed that the clergy, as the servants of the institution, are the sole channel through which the Christian ministry is meant to operate. The laity is liable only for the financial support and housekeeping chores which keep the institution intact and expanding. Nothing could be further from the truth as revealed in the New Testament. It is also true that being a Christian does not simply begin after hours or beyond commercial interests, but that it has to be accomplished in the midst of hourly work, in every handshake and with every telephone call.

Often the theological theory of the universal priesthood of believers or of lay maturity is refuted by the practice of an ecclesiastical institution. Stammer has stated it this way:

As soon as the administration of the Word has been delegated to the office (of minister), there inevitably developed from it a monopolization that just

as inevitably degraded and disenfranchised the uninstalled Christian.<sup>20</sup>

The baptism of every person becomes his basic ordination to be a Christian, to witness, to serve, to minister. This basic ordination of baptism does not exclude subsequent ordinations for special tasks. Weber says this:

Everyone who was incorporated and ordained through baptism in the militant church is therefore irreplaceable and indispensable. This frees us from having constantly to compare ourselves with others. There is no more place for superiority complexes, but neither for inferiority complexes.<sup>21</sup>

The whole concept of ministry is struggling for re-definition. The present image of the clergy's role hinders a concept of the ministry of the laity. If there is only a functional difference of services between the clergy and the laity, as insisted on by the Reformers, then all mature Christians may exercise their full ministries. Come brings the problem into sharp focus when he writes:

Over against the apparently growing participation of the whole membership in the various ministries of the church, there still remains the blunt fact of ordination. If every member is in some way a minister for the building up of the body of Christ, why are

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<sup>20</sup>Stammler, op. cit., p. 113.

<sup>21</sup>Hans-Ruedi Weber, The Militant Ministry (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), p. 55.

some set apart, and usually above, by a ritual or formal public act called ordination? . . . The fact is that no definitive answer can be given at all. . . .

In the face of this confusion, one is tempted to conclude that the elimination of the clergy-laity distinction also calls for the complete abandonment of all ordination, in both theory and practice. Can the inclusion of every member into some form of the church-directed ministry be taken seriously as long as a minority group is set above and apart from the rest by an ostensibly mystery-laden ritual that seems to impart unique powers and privileges?<sup>22</sup>

To a large extent, the ministry of the laity is in the world, while that of the clergy is in the gathered congregation. However, both are part of the one mission of the church in and for the world. The clergy is set apart for preaching, administering the sacraments and the equipping of the church for its work of ministry to the world. When seen in this way, the mission of the church is consistently one. Both ministries express the truth that there are diversities of gifts but the same Lord. Littell says:

If we again take seriously the ministry of the laity, vast areas of our present organized church life will be radically changed.<sup>23</sup>

No one can yet foresee the final outcome of such changes. Some will be indicated further in Chapters X and XI.

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<sup>22</sup>Come, op. cit., p. 108.

<sup>23</sup>Franklin H. Littell, "The Ministry of the Laity" (Address to National Council of Churches, Philadelphia, December 2, 1963), p. 3.



## CHAPTER X

### AN EMERGING CONCEPT--THE SERVANT CHURCH

Increasingly the Christian church has been redefining its mission in terms of the ministry of Jesus Christ as servant. Ayres had stated it precisely saying:

The church exists to serve the world and has no being except as it is a servant.<sup>1</sup>

The new forms reviewed in Chapters II through VIII shared this common concern. They wanted to make their witness to the world more effective and more relevant. The metropolis is the emerging form of our society. The servant church seems to be the emerging form of the church in that society.

#### I. THE EMERGING ROLE OF THE SERVANT CHURCH

For some centuries now, the local church has been largely committed to the private concerns associated with residence, such as the maintenance of emotional stability and the nurture of children. Since in a mass society, residence is that sphere most segregated from the public concerns of metropolis, there is growing concern for emphasizing responsibility in the public sphere. This

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<sup>1</sup>Francis O. Ayres, The Ministry of the Laity (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 31.

sphere will be technologically organized with many specialized centers of power and decision.

The term "servant" has a great deal to do with the understanding of what it means to be a Christian. To be a servant, is not to be a lord. It is to be directed toward others, which is the world. Therefore the church in the world is not in existence for the purpose of pulling the world within its walls, but for the purpose of joining hands with God to make the life of man more meaningful. This is to call men into an awareness of what it means to be truly human. The church's function is not to rule the world but to serve it. To this, the new forms previously described have committed themselves. Responsibility in history making becomes primary and institutional loyalty secondary. Winter has said it this way:

The proclamation of openness to the future, the call to faith, is the work of the Church in the secularized city. It witnesses to One who will be present for man in the future for which man assumes responsibility for history in a faith which confirms him in his freedom.<sup>2</sup>

The servant church is essential, for it affirms man's freedom for history by declaring the promise that is given to him in history in Jesus Christ. Amid the complexities of metropolis the church must become the

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<sup>2</sup>Gibson Winter, The New Creation as Metropolis (New York: Macmillan, 1963), pp. 53-54.

ministering servant of judgment and hope. Where Christianity formerly sought to draw men into conformity to the institutional organization, the servant church must affirm man's freedom for history and strengthen him in the responsible exercise of this freedom. The church can no longer function as an institutional structure of salvation alongside worldly structures. It must also exercise its witness within the worldly structures recognizing and acknowledging God's concern for all mankind.

How does the church fulfill this ministry? By more doing and less talking. It is one thing to talk about racial discrimination and quite another to carry out some concrete plans. It is one thing to talk about the problems of housing, employment, education, drug addiction, or alcoholism, but a different matter to move into such problems. It is easy to confess Christ in the beauty of the sanctuary, but quite different to make a responsible witness in the political and social structures of the world. If God is active in the structures of the world, the church must join Him there and attempt to see what He is doing. This will mean carrying on a dialogue with the world rather than a monologue. It is precisely at this point where the Evangelical Academies have done such a remarkable job. They have learned that church member and non-member can enter into meaningful dialogue

to which each contributes and from which each gains insight.

The faithful exercise of servanthood suggests a new concept of ministry as already suggested in Chapter IX. Ministry means the faithful exercise of servanthood in the public sphere, the ministry of all Christians. The context of ministry is in society as much as in the religious institution.

## II. THE EMERGING ROLE OF THE LAITY

Denominations today appear somewhat irrelevant and the conventional distinction between "the ministry" and "the laity" fails to do justice to reality. While the ordained ministry has much to give, all the members must be involved in the work of ministering to people's needs. Nor are the leaders of the church to be equated with "the ministry" and then led with "the laity." The function of leadership is vested in the whole church.

If the church exists to serve the world and does not exist except as a servant, any restriction of ministry to a small fraction of the church's membership becomes ridiculous. The world consists of industry, business, politics, metropolitan complexes, schools, universities, mass communications, family life, and other areas of life. The clergy cannot serve in all these areas for they have

neither access to nor knowledge of them.

As a servant, every Christian is to provide an example of integrity, self-sacrifice and diligent labor. One of the contemporary problems is that many Christians do not know whom to serve, the church or the world. They fail to see that Christ can only transform society through them. The role of servanthood is the task of every Christian. This image of the servant is biblically accurate and historically relevant. Tracey Jones has said that "Christians should not be afraid to intervene in the affairs of the world."<sup>3</sup> They are to be the conscience in the community. When there is injustice, Christians must be the first ones concerned and active. In this way they can fulfill honest, faithful and diligent service to the community. It is not difficult to see what servanthood specifically requires.

Elton Trueblood speaks of the effective Christian pattern as a base and a field.<sup>4</sup> The base, whether church, house church, renewal group, mission group, or Iona, is the center to which the people of God return for new strength. The field of operation for the Christian is in

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<sup>3</sup>Tracey K. Jones, Jr., Our Mission Today (New York: World Outlook Press, 1963), p. 129.

<sup>4</sup>Elton Trueblood, The Company of the Committed (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), p. 74.

the world. The return of the members of the Iona Community to the island is always temporary because that is not the primary scene of operation. A prayer group which does not make its members more effective apostles in their jobs and homes is essentially a failure. The mission of the Christian is to permeate the common life and live out his faith there. Engagement in the metropolitan struggle is the ministry to which the laity are called. The continuing presence and faithfulness of such a ministry involves suffering and sacrifice. These accompany servanthood.

Massive urbanization has changed the relationship of pastors to their communities. No longer are they influential in the affairs of men. The disruption of this pastoral relationship means that sensitive laymen must represent the church in the processes of community life and development. In a highly technological metropolis a pastor can hardly be acquainted with complexities of urban growth, change, and development. If there is to be a ministry there, the laity who are familiar with the technical problems and engaged in the planning processes must be that ministry. A laity who participate in the processes of society and develop theological sensitivity must serve as minister in mass society. Winter puts it this way:

A laity, theologically self-conscious and socially alert, is the form through which the Church's witness in metropolitan society will be realized.<sup>5</sup>

This does not suggest that the clergy can ignore the forces that are shaping society. Pastors and other religious professionals must gain far more understanding of technological society in order to serve the laity.

What of proclamation? It must largely fall to the work of the laity. A disciplined life characterized by theological reflection will be essential. Reflection implies conscious awareness of the present meaning of events. Starting from the historicity of man, it asks about his identity in the light of the events of which he is a part. Winter explains such reflection saying:

Christian reflection acknowledges that even the identity disclosed in the saving events is only man's identity as he appropriates it in projecting his own future; reflective participation in the saving history is the opening of one's own history to ultimate questioning and hope. Faith in Jesus as the Christ is acknowledgment that Jesus discloses who I am; to be in Christ, thus, is to come to myself, to recognize myself, to come to my true identity. I discover the meaning of my past through Him. I become conscious of my true being. . . . Hence, engagement in the world, responsibility for shaping that world, becomes the milieu of proclamation, and ultimately the proper milieu of confession and worship.<sup>6</sup>

The work of the servant church, in its laity, is to engage the world in reflection on the meaning of its

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<sup>5</sup>Winter, op. cit., p. 11.      <sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

history and act responsibly in shaping that history.

### III. THE EMERGING ROLE OF CLERGY

It is abundantly clear that the creative task of witness, planning, and prophetic proclamation must be exercised by a competent laity in the public sphere. This suggests three-fold responsibility for the clergy; (1) evoking this lay ministry, (2) attacking the privatization of religious interests, and (3) working toward the theological maturity of the laity.

Preaching and teaching by the clergy must be continued but primarily as he finds himself serving the laity. As a theologically trained specialist, his role will increasingly become one of cultivating theological insight among the laymen. In many of the new forms of the church described in previous chapters, the clergy are finding this to be their role. Thus he becomes the servant of the laity rather than the laity being his servant. This is the concept of ministry at the Church of the Savior. Every member is spoken of as a minister and the clergyman serves as the theological specialist for them.

Such a role has drastic implications for the numerous administrative tasks presently performed by clergy. Working with the laity will occupy his time and attention, while administrative works take a secondary



place.

The servant church implies a new conception of the office of the clergyman or religious specialist. Winter has this to say about them:

The prophetic fellowship (servant church) needs theological specialists in a way that other forms of the Church in other periods of history never needed them, for it works with a theologically self-conscious laity. However, the Church in a secular world needs specialists who are willing to be auxiliary aids to the laity rather than attempting to enlist the laity as auxiliaries to their organizational enterprise.<sup>7</sup>

This does not make the clergy any less important, rather it magnifies his importance. To be a religious specialist in the servant church is to be primarily concerned for the nurture of the laity that they may minister to the world.

#### IV. EMERGING FORMS OF THE SERVANT CHURCH

Do the new forms of the church described in the earlier chapters fit the concept of the servant church as outlined in this chapter? For the most part they do. Each of them points in the direction of being classified a servant church although not fitting the classification completely. It has already been suggested that these need to be considered as valid forms of the church just

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

as the present forms of local congregations. The principal difference is found in the direction of its ministry which is outward. Many others similar to these may be found around the world, usually focused on renewal and relevance to the world.

One of the characteristics of the servant church is to engage in dialogue with the world. This is the primary purpose of the Evangelical Academies and the coffee houses. The Church of the Savior in various of its groups shares this concern, as does the Detroit Industrial Mission and the Glide Urban Center. By approaching man at the point of his secular strength, he is likely to be more interested because he finds the church interested in his life.

Representative of the various experiments in community life is the Iona Community. The concern of Iona is not just with itself however. Rather it expresses the concern of the church to find a pattern of life that is relevant to a changing society. The expressions of outreach have been many, as we have seen, but all undergirded by the common discipline of the Community. These have truly been an expression of servanthood.

Another mark of the servant church is a comprehensive outreach to the total neighborhood. Such an approach is exemplified by the East Harlem Protestant

Parish and the Church of the Savior.

Temporary ad hoc groupings or special ministries for specific problems of a city or region are an expression of the servant church. The Glide Urban Center, Detroit Industrial Mission and some groups in the Church of the Savior are examples.

The "church within a church" represents a form of penetration into the diverse worlds of modern man. The Koinonia groups, the House Church and the Rockville Congregation are attempts to reach people through residential forms and fulfill the ministry of servant.

If the diversification of forms as advocated above is recognized as valid, it will lead to a renewed understanding of the church as one body with many gifts and diverse functions. This calls for a reexamination of the place of education in the church.

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## CHAPTER XI

### THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

What are new forms of the church saying to us regarding the role of education? Four major emphases stand out among others: (1) a new sense of commitment with discipline, (2) the importance of worship, (3) lay education or learning the faith, and (4) the need for lay training or skill to be on mission in the world. These will suggest appropriate directions for education which we may explore, as well as place a new importance on education. New forms of the church are calling into question the traditional patterns of church life. In some cases a radical restructuring may be essential while in other cases a new orientation and purpose given to existing groups will enable them to be on mission. We live in a time of catastrophic change. We know for certain that the world will never be the same again. Neither can the church and its program continue in the same old way and still be effective. In the process of change, education takes on new importance for the life and mission of the church. Structures and methods, as means to an end, must evolve out of a particular situation and be flexible and adaptable for any given community.

## I. COMMITMENT AND DISCIPLINE

Our study of emerging forms of the church has pointed out rather explicitly the necessity for a deep sense of commitment and a demanding discipline. If the church is to be the Body of Christ, charged with the ministry of reconciliation in the world, a deep commitment to the gospel is imperative. Half-hearted lip service or subscribing casually to an outmoded moralism will not result in reconciliation. There is an urgent need to think of the church as a live, well disciplined, informed people of God. A higher quality of Christian community will then result in a more effective witness in the world.

Commitment and discipline must begin with the baptism of the new believer. His training must be thorough so that he understands the nature of his new faith with its far-reaching implications. It is at this point that he receives his ordination or commission for ministry, not at some later time. The importance of education and training becomes paramount with the entrance of each new believer into the Christian life and community. The Church of the Savior serves as an excellent illustration of the seriousness with which commitment and discipline must be treated in the new age of the church. Nothing less than a total commitment to Christ as Lord with necessary attendant disciplines is

expected. These are taught and learned in the framework of the School of Christian Living which must be attended for at least a year, as well as by participation in the corporate life of the church. Commitment is not automatic but matures and deepens through the disciplines of daily prayer, weekly worship, daily study of the Scriptures, participation in group life, stewardship, and redeeming service. Thus, one learns what it means to be a Christian so that his membership is one of integrity. An annual recommitment is the opportunity for personal evaluation and the chance to review the seriousness of one's intention to the aims to which he has pledged himself. Such expectations of commitment and discipline have serious implications for the educational work of the church.

Worship, study, and service are all integral to the life of the Christian as we have seen earlier. Similar disciplines and commitment have been necessary in each of the new forms of church life. Worship without service becomes meaningless. Knowledge without commitment is sterile. Commitment without worship fades away. In the disciplined, committed lives the result is the kind of fellowship that is the New Testament koinonia, alive, active, witnessing, and serving. Speaking of the contemporary church, Robinson says "Its charter is to be the servant

of the world."<sup>1</sup> Obviously it cannot be this without adequate preparation, commitment, and discipline which further serves to emphasize the important role of education in the church.

## II. WORSHIP

A second major emphasis from our study of emerging forms of the church has been the importance of worship. The laity has been stressed as the essence of the servant church and that without adequate training they cannot be the servant. However, the education of laymen is not simply for his witness in the world, it is first of all for worship. If the layman is not able to worship all subsequent ministry will be superficial and lack depth. The central task of the church is to offer spiritual sacrifices to God, to worship Him. It is this aspect of education that is most often neglected. The education and training of the Christian is first and foremost for worship. He needs to carry the experiences of daily life to worship, as well as to carry the experiences of worship into daily life. Thus the worshipping life of the church will engender a deeper faith in God and a larger commitment to God's mission in the world.

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<sup>1</sup>John A. T. Robinson, Honest to God (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), p. 134.

Corporate worship is an essential part of the disciplined life in preparation for mission and ministry. This emphasis has been particularly stressed in the Iona Community, the house church movement, the Missionary Congregation, and the Church of the Savior. Too often worship, including Holy Communion, has been something Protestants do when they feel like it. The centrality of worship to the life and mission of the Christian is again being discovered, especially in these new forms of the church.

There has also been a special effort to make worship relevant to the life and work of the worshipper which is highly significant. The house church movement seeks to do this as worship takes place in the context of the home, where daily life is lived. In the East Harlem Protestant Parish the relationship of life and worship is made explicit when the minister steps down from the chancel and stands among the people to inquire what is happening to them in God's world. This drama of reporting is then followed by prayer, as these concerns, joys, and sorrows are incorporated into this act of worship. This additional example from Iona, in the explanation of the services of worship, will further illustrate the point.

Because, too, we believe daily work anywhere is an act of worship we set our daily work on the Island between the first half and the second half of a full



act of worship. Thus there is no Benediction at the close of the morning service but an ascription of Praise. The emphasis in the morning is on Confession and Thanksgiving: in the evening on Intercession. The Benediction is pronounced on the day's work and worship together.<sup>2</sup>

In this way, the relation of work and worship is dramatized. Attempts to make worship relevant to life were also noted in the house church where the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper takes place in the informal setting of the home. This is not to say that worship should not take place at a church. However, the church should not primarily serve as a shrine or an assembly hall, but as headquarters; headquarters for launching people into engagement in the world. The plaque on the building in Washington, D.C. reads simply "Headquarters of the Church of the Savior," indicative of the fact that this is not the major scene of operations. The major scenes are at the art center, the coffee house, the factory for the unemployed, and elsewhere. The house church has underscored this same emphasis. Increasingly worship will need to take place in the setting of life rather than separated from it. This is one of the unique and important lessons to be learned from these new forms of the church.

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<sup>2</sup>"The Abbey Services of the Iona Community" (Glasgow: Iona Community), p. 3.

### III. LAY EDUCATION

A third major emphasis which new forms of the church call to our attention is what is here designated as lay education or learning the Christian faith. This is what the church has assumed it has been doing, educating people in the faith, but a new intent and seriousness are here implied.

The meaning of lay education. The education and training of the Christian must be a unified program. Learning the meaning of baptism, learning the theological doctrines of the church, and learning the meaning of worship are basic to understanding what the Christian faith is all about. For purposes of distinction we are differentiating between education or learning the faith and training for mission. Hunter substantiates this reasoning when he says:

The nurture we receive within the Church gathered has a twofold purpose:

(1) It enables us to find our place, provided by God Himself, within that community in which the Holy Spirit lives.

(2) It is also the first step in training us for carrying out the ministry of reconciliation in the world.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>David R. Hunter, Christian Education as Engagement (New York: Seabury Press, 1963), p. 73.

While the two, lay education and lay training are not entirely separable, it is helpful to see them with this distinction. Serious study to introduce a person to the Christian faith and community, its meaning, and its implications is vital. Study needs to be as much a part of the Christian life as worship or the sharing of one's financial resources. To be sure, there should be more than study, but there should be no less than serious study. Children, youth, and adults need to be better equipped especially in knowledge of the Bible and theology. They need to discover who they are as they gather for study and worship. As they discover the meaning of Christianity and their role as agents of reconciliation, then the thesis of Section IV, training for mission and ministry, becomes a possibility.

Lay education thus conceived is basically different from leadership training as practiced by most churches. Leadership training has usually been for a more efficient operation of the institution, while this concept of lay education points toward a better understanding of the faith and ultimately a more effective witness in the world. When education has been thought of in terms of educating voluntary workers for service in the church, it gives the impression that the perpetuation and promotion of the church as an institution is the final aim. Then the ideal layman is the active churchman who gives his spare time to various

activities of the church without seeing what his mission and the mission of the church really is. The emerging forms of the church are helping us see this necessary difference.

Baptism. One of the most natural places for the church to exercise its responsibility for lay education is at the time of baptism. Since baptism is the initiation into the Body of Christ, it is deserving of the most careful handling possible. An adult who is a candidate for baptism should receive ample education so that he not only understands the meaning of this sacrament, but also has an intelligent understanding of the Christian faith. This does not presume that his education concludes at this point but leads to the desire for further knowledge and understanding.

When infants are baptized the church needs to more adequately train the parents regarding the nature and meaning of this sacrament so that they can assist in the nurture of the child in the Christian faith. Parents should refuse to make promises they do not understand or are unable to keep, while the church must be careful not to enter into such a partnership nor contribute to such blasphemy. As part of the initiation into the Christian community, the church has a solemn responsibility to prepare more adequately those who are to be baptized.

Confirmation. When one is confirmed and becomes a member of the church he assumes the vows of full membership in the Christian community. Training for such membership has often been extremely casual or shallow resulting in a high percentage of luke-warm members in American Protestantism. Wilmore emphasizes this point when he says:

But by far the two most significant facts about the great majority of people who join and remain in the main-line churches are: (1) they are involved in what we call "the life and work of the church" at a very low intensity--mainly by occasional attendance at Sunday morning worship (it is estimated that less than 25 per cent of all church members are active in the sense of regular attendance and participation in one or more church groups); (2) they have no awareness that becoming church members makes them "peculiar people" in the society of which they are a part.<sup>4</sup>

Church members do not see themselves as the special people of God who have a ministry to the world. What about such marginal members? The suggestion is not being made that they be dismissed for God does not dismiss them. Yet they pose a danger to the mission of the church as discussed thus far. The danger comes in their ignorance of the meaning of the church, weakening everything it does in the world. Nevertheless, these marginal members are also the church. They are the group from which the active lay apostolate is recruited. Their reactionary or unconcerned

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<sup>4</sup>Gayraud S. Wilmore, The Secular Relevance of the Church (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 64.

attitude can help the church sharpen its focus of mission to the world. The house church movement has looked upon such people as part of its mission in the world and involved them in small group discussions and worship in the informality of a home setting. While this will help remedy the situation, only careful training in the future will serve to prevent similar apathy.

The Church of the Savior has done a more comprehensive and complete job of training new members. This would seem essential for any church. An undisciplined and uninformed membership of doubtful orientation is a dangerous thing for a church. The practice of an annual recommitment to the vows of membership or releasing oneself from membership is an idea worth further exploration in the church. It should also be said that church membership must be more than acceptance of Christ as Lord and joining a church. The basis of any call to membership must include a commitment to servanthood in God's world.

Children and youth. Children and youth are very much a part of the church and their nurture in the faith has been a dominant theme of concern in today's local church. If using them to reach families is a part of the mission of the church in a particular setting, then the strategy of the house church school has merit. On the other hand, when the mission of the church is conceived

as penetration of the structures of society as in the Church of the Savior, then the church must limit its program to the children of the committed. Each local unit of the church will need to determine its program and mission and plan its program accordingly.

The possibility of cooperative Christian education for children has not yet been adequately explored. Many millions of dollars used in the construction of educational facilities for a local church could then be channeled to other avenues of outreach. Duplication of facilities wastes time, effort, and money. Directors of Christian Education could be hired cooperatively to supervise and/or teach. A cooperative faculty of trained teachers would assure a high level of Christian training for the children and youth. Classes might be conducted throughout the week to make maximum use of the facilities. Curriculum could be developed to fit the needs of the community as is now being done by the Church of the Savior and the East Harlem Protestant Parish.

While the nurture of children and youth has a place in the mission of the church, Elton Trueblood suggests:

Perhaps, if we were to become really intelligent about education, the greater part of the emphasis would be placed on the training of those of older

years. Education is really too good a thing to waste it on the young.<sup>5</sup>

Such a statement seems radical but not out of keeping with the emphasis of some of the emerging forms of the church which have concentrated their efforts principally on adults. In view of the church's drastic need for better informed, intelligent, articulate witnesses it seems essential to experiment with the training of children and youth. They, too, need to know and understand the Christian faith while they are young, as well as to begin finding ways to express servanthood. The content of their curriculum, however, will need to be directed toward the goals of mission and ministry in the world.

#### IV. LAY TRAINING

The fourth major emphasis to be discovered in our study of emerging forms of the church is lay training.

The meaning and purpose of lay training. The church exists not so much to do something as to be the church. Yet to be the church it becomes the bearer of Christ's ministry of reconciliation to the world. Thus the church has two operating areas. One is its corporate life of

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<sup>5</sup>Elton Trueblood, Your Other Vocation (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), p. 117.



listening and responding to God in worship and study in its gathered life. The other is its ministry and mission in the world. Trueblood expresses it this way:

Christians may indeed come in, but they do so only that they may, in consequence, go out, and furthermore, that they may go out with greater effectiveness.<sup>6</sup>

For this ministry of going out there must be adequate preparation or lay training. Such lay training is not primarily for ministries and services within the church, but for the task of witnessing to God in Christ in the world as the layman meets his world in secular occupations in the midst of a non-Christian or anti-Christian culture. Laymen are often conscious of such a demand but lack the perspective to see in their secular life how their faith should become concrete, articulate, and relevant. To such lay training the church must give its serious attention. The normal pattern of church life has not provided this kind of training or help for the layman. One of the most surprising facts about the Christian cause today is that so little thought has gone into the problem of how and where the ordinary Christian is to be trained if we are to take seriously the idea of every Christian as one engaged in ministry or mission. It is an enormous task, and up to

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<sup>6</sup>Elton Trueblood, The Company of the Committed (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), p. 69.

now we have done little about it. The suggestion here is that this should now provide the major emphasis for the life of the church, that lay training be first and foremost among its activities. Lay men need to be provided with skills and understanding in order to be on mission in the world. They need to become proficient through instruction and practice.

The word training suggests the process of acquiring skills necessary for a particular task. Thus one can speak of training engineers, typists, or plant foremen. On the other hand, there is need for personal development. Both are imperative for the preparation of Christians to live in the kind of world described in Chapter IX and to be a part of the servant church of Chapter X. The need for the people of God to understand and interpret their situation with ability and imagination has already been underscored. The emerging forms of the church have shown that lay people can again acquire such skill and become competent to exercise their distinctive role of ministry and mission in the world.

In the technical fields there are two essential parts to training: the theoretical, and the practical. The theoretical aspects are designed to provide an understanding of the fundamental principles of the subject. Practical work gives the opportunity of mastering certain

basic skills, of appreciating the practical relevance of the theory, and of developing the art of learning from practical experience. The two parts of training should enable the trainee to cope with the problems he is likely to meet. Bonhoeffer reminds us that the Christian is not called out of the world, but must remain in the world, which he refers to as a secular calling.<sup>7</sup> Training for mission thus becomes imperative to fulfill this calling.

Strategy for lay training. In the church, three stages seem essential for developing a ministry to the world: calling, training, and deployment.

Calling implies a challenge to join in the exploration of new frontiers of service in the name of Jesus Christ. We have seen how this sense of calling to a particular mission group underlies the program of the Church of the Savior. Such a calling is not out of the world but into it to affirm worldly life, to help structure it according to justice, freedom, and service to one another. Many marginal church members are longing for this kind of interpretation of the faith and an opportunity for service in this more meaningful way.

What kind of training is needed in preparation for

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<sup>7</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, trans. R. H. Fuller (New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 299.

this ministry? It must be a continuing education flexible enough to meet the needs of the laity in various stages of development. The particular church and the situation of its environment must also be taken into account.

Actual involvement of the laity in ministry is the primary occasion for learning about ministry itself. The deliberate movement into the world is a learning experience. Because so little is known about such a ministry in the world, the laymen will probably "learn as they go."

Information, knowledge, and technique will all be a part of training. Many churchmen are knowledgeable about the field of their daily life. They are an excellent resource of information too often neglected by the church. Undergirding this kind of practical information, there is a place for a more formal and systematic study program. Theology, the nature and mission of the church in urban society, Christian ethics, and Bible are some of these. The Church of the Savior, with its comprehensive program of membership training and continuing elective courses is assured of informed and trained lay people. Such lay training for mission and ministry, however, is not an armchair exercise. What is learned needs to be put to the laboratory test of life's daily experiences.

Now we come to the matter of deployment. Deployment refers to a strategy of Christian action by what has

been called "the scattered church." The church is already deployed in the world in the form of its laity who are in factories, places of business, politics, school, and in the community. Inasmuch as witness is made by these laymen, the church is strategically engaged with the world. Through their vocational life, the laity is already scattered in the world. By deployment, however, is implied a more deliberate approach to the world. One does not depend primarily on the individual decision of each person to bear witness in his own place. Rather, one depends upon the decision of the group to maintain, through one of its members or through the group, an outpost in some sector of the community that is the objective of corporate action. This approach is used to some degree in the East Harlem Protestant Parish with some effectiveness. The strategy implied is that when a church is aware of a need that is not being met in the community, it should mobilize. This will mean that most lay activities in the church should be carefully reevaluated and redirected toward this purpose. The criterion must be service to the community.

Mission means joining ourselves to something that God is doing, not something we do on our own. In the whole educational process then, we are seeking to relate to an action of God in the world, knowing that He is already at work.

Type of lay training. The first type of training for mission and ministry is orientation training. One needs to discover the nature of the world in which he lives, and especially the structures of society with which he has daily contact. Four principal areas of life within the world demand the concern of the layman. These are occupation, the community, recreation, and the family. It is as though he lives in four different worlds. The problems, experiences, and conflicts are different in each sphere. Perception as to what is happening needs to be sharpened, meaning that it is questionable whether general orientation training alone can be effective and serve the need for better understanding of the dynamics of life.

A second type training needed for mission and ministry is procedural planning. A fairly accurate knowledge of one's situation in the world is a prelude to developing a strategy for ministry. The concepts of individual response and action in the world ignore the essential nature of the church as the Body of Christ. This does not mean that Christians do not sometimes find themselves working alone in some area of life, apart from other Christians. Rather, it means that in such instances they work alone only in a physical sense, that they are under orders, that what they do even at moments of personal decision-making is a part of a larger strategy.

Such planning and strategy will be the outcome of orientation. There can probably be no uniform approach to carrying out the mission of the church in the world. Each must be adapted to a particular situation as we have seen so well illustrated in the preceding chapters. Hence, there is much wisdom in making a cellular approach to such planning.

Planning is one thing, encounter another. This is the third type of training needed. In tactical encounter, the layman begins to carry out his plan in the place where he works, in the community where he has civic responsibility, or in other realms of his daily life. This he regularly shares and evaluates with others in a common discipline. From such sharing, rebriefing, refueling sessions, he continues his ministry in encounter.

While it has been silently assumed all along that the ministry of the laity includes both sexes, an added word about women is essential. Not always have the words laity and lay women been synonymous. Women must be given a role in the mission of the church equal to that of men. Churches must give up the policy of seeing women in the role of handling parish dinners, bazaars, and other time-consuming, inefficient money raising events. The mission of the church cannot be handled on a sex-segregated basis. Women should mobilize to carry out their ministry in

addition to and along with men.

Within the local church. Lay training may take place in varied locales as we have seen in new forms of the church. The suggestion that the local church revamp its program to give priority to lay training has already been made. Old structures tend to degenerate into rules and regulations. From new forms of the church, working to be relevant to society, we see the necessity of openness and flexibility. A considerable variety of patterns may be necessary emanating from the church if it seriously wishes to encounter life at all levels in the community. The process of adjusting the life of the church to meet the needs of the world in which it finds itself may be long and slow. But it must change.

Lay training will need to involve the whole person as he learns the theology and the mission of the Christian faith. It will involve his ability to think, to feel, and to act. Therefore, such training must take place in the context of relationships, for it is in relationship with other human beings that one becomes a whole person. This is why the small group approach to mission has been so dominant in our study of new forms of the church. The koinonia groups, the mission groups of the Church of the Savior, and the Bible study groups of the East Harlem Protestant Parish are excellent illustrations of this



approach to mission and ministry. Such a group must assume a degree of commitment, undertake certain common disciplines, reading resources, research, sharing in discussion, and join in some group action.

The small group approach is not a denial of other means by which the laity can be prepared for their work of ministry. It does seem one of the most applicable and logical starting places within the local church. In previous chapters it has been noted that groups usually ranged from six to eight to as many as twenty or thirty. In his appraisal of the small group approach, Grimes arrives at a similar conclusion when he says:

Twelve may be a maximally productive number, though a group may be smaller and, I believe, as large as twenty or slightly more. Indeed certain qualities of good group life may come into being when there are twenty-five or thirty; and it is our hope that to some extent an entire congregation may realize its potential as a community. Six to eighteen is probably the range of maximum productivity, however, and some would insist on a maximum of seven or eight.<sup>8</sup>

Generally, there are two ways for a group to work: (1) begin with a practical problem and work toward a Christian understanding of it, and (2) begin with an element of Christian teaching or a part of the Bible and work toward the discovery of its relevance for life. Both ways

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<sup>8</sup>Howard Grimes, The Rebirth of the Laity (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 141.

have been used by various groups in this study with equal effectiveness.

A common discipline for the group seems essential on the basis of this study. The koinonia groups, the mission groups of the Church of the Savior, the Bible study and discussion groups of the East Harlem Protestant Parish, and the Iona Community have all found certain group disciplines necessary to the corporate life of the group. Such a discipline seems to assure a common goal and give purpose to the group's life together. The common discipline most often referred to is the study of the Bible. Surely any training for ministry in the world must include considerable group study of the Bible by themes and by passages to discover the relevancy of Biblical truth.

There is also need to study the traditional doctrines of the church and attempt to restate and understand them in contemporary terms. At times these will arise from systematic Bible study. Some groups will find it worthwhile to wrestle with such doctrines as incarnation, redemption, Holy Spirit, Baptism, Lord's Supper, salvation, resurrection, law, and gospel. Many present day problems need theological and Biblical reflection and interpretation in terms of establishing a Christian attitude toward the problem. Such areas as labor-management, war-peace, race, welfare, city planning, and urban renewal are relegated to

the totally secular mind to handle while the church has overlooked its responsibility in these areas. Groups can easily become isolated and inward-looking. Practical involvement in the affairs of men and society coupled with study and discussion helps keep the balance. On the other hand, only involvement without reflection and study can be equally as tragic. As long as its life together is productive and its mission still unfulfilled, the group should remain together. When its mission has been accomplished or group life is unproductive, the group should be terminated.

A variation of the small group approach to training for mission is found in the house church. Southcott says "the house-church is the way in which we are going to train adults to be the Church."<sup>9</sup> In the Sunday evening house services the laymen do the preaching, lead the prayers, and read the Bible. Through involvement they are learning the doctrines behind the liturgy and the relevance of their faith to life. The extensive house church at times meets in the homes of outsiders. Often members learn as much as anyone from the experience as they share their faith in witness and as they learn from the outsider of his needs.

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<sup>9</sup>E. W. Southcott, The Parish Comes Alive (London: Mowbray, 1961), p. 104.

The Rickville Congregation in Chapter VI is another endeavor to make the home and its informal setting the center for mission and ministry for the neighborhood. This seems to be another appropriate direction for training in mission and mission itself.

If the church is to be on mission and the laity are to minister to the world the local church will need to give much more priority to its program of lay training. Youth groups, men's groups, and women's groups in the local church could begin to be restructured for this purpose rather than the perpetuation of the group's friendly fellowship and occasional service project. In many ways what has been suggested in the small group approach could also begin in elective classes or in an organized school. The pattern of the School of Christian Living of the Church of the Savior is an illustration of classes for the beginner as well as for the more mature Christian that will aid him in the understanding and practice of his mission and his ministry. It is also possible that such schools could be conducted cooperatively by several churches offering classes for new Christians, classes for those more mature in the faith, and classes for parents of children and youth. In many cases lay training will need to cut across denominational lines to strengthen ecumenicity at the level of the local community and approach a ministry

to the world together. Although Christians may be divided in church membership, a great deal of their ministry and mission in the world needs to take place cooperatively. Therefore, training opportunities must be available on an inter-church basis in any given community if there is to be an effective witness. With imagination the local church will discover a limitless number of ways in which it can begin to minister to the world.

Alongside the local church. A study of emerging forms of the church discloses that church renewal is not only being accomplished from within but is also taking place alongside the local church in paraparochial forms of the church. The Evangelical Academies, the Iona Community and the urban centers are examples of such paraparochial forms. Three characteristics stand out as most important: (1) dialogue and encounter, (2) centers of adult training, and (3) places of counseling and proclamation of the gospel in spheres of everyday life.

Dialogue and encounter between church and world is becoming an accepted pattern for the church. The Academies have been successful in establishing contact with people who were not close to the church. They did not come to sit and listen. Rather, the church met these people at their accustomed level to carry on candid conversations as equals. Through dialogue and reflection on the pressing

human problems they have found that each had something to learn from the other and that the Biblical message was not irrelevant to contemporary life. In a similar way, the need for dialogue and encounter has led the Glide Urban Center, the Iona Community and the Detroit Industrial Mission into identification and involvement in the structures of society. This is because they are convinced that the church must become concerned and involved with every aspect of human existence. The church must increasingly continue this approach if it is to fulfill its mission.

These paraparochial forms of the church thus serve as centers of training. The Iona Community conceives of its work on the island as training for ministry on the mainland. The Glide Urban Center, in its program of internships, seeks to train clergy and laity for ministry in the world. Similar training opportunities based on involvement with labor and management are part of the program of the Detroit Industrial Mission. Such training is invaluable in learning the nature of society and the needs of individuals within it.

Relating the gospel to all spheres of life involves dialogue and encounter as well as training. However, there is a sense in which counseling and proclamation are an addition to these. In all the circumstances of human existence and social ethical responsibility, there needs to

be an attempt to make the gospel relevant. This will come through counseling and proclamation at the point where life is being lived by just being there, affirming life, offering friendship, and in countless other ways. These new forms have reminded us that a twenty minute sermon at eleven o'clock Sunday morning is not the only time and place to proclaim the gospel.

Many additional types of lay training centers embodying these three characteristics are springing up around the world. Only time and experience will determine their effectiveness. New forms remind us that no pattern is to be followed universally but that mission and ministry must arise in the context of a particular situation. Each situation will dictate the details of the pattern. Church campgrounds, little used except in summer, are an untapped resource for training centers. Mobile training teams offer still another procedure for reaching into urban and rural areas with limited leadership resources.

In the theological seminary. Theological seminaries are numerous, whereas training centers for the lay ministry are only beginning to appear. This reveals how little the church has accepted the idea of the universal ministry. Since schools for lay ministry are being established, one wonders if they will become little institutional seminaries producing non-clerical professional ministers. Schools

alone will never provide a full solution to the problem, but may offer another way of implementing the need for lay training. Since theological seminaries are commissioned to train young men and women for ministry, does this oblige them to offer training to people engaged in lay ministry? Can the lay ministry and the ordained ministry remain separated? Such questions remain for the future to answer.

The church exists for mission. Increasingly the church has come to recognize her role as a servant. In a changing technological age, this has led to the emergence of a great variety of new forms. These new forms within and alongside the institutional church are leading the whole church to reform, renewal, and relevance. As new forms continue to emerge, additional research will be needed to evaluate their pioneering efforts to let mankind know that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" so that all may become truly human.



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